

THE NORTHERN WORLD

Slaves and Warriors in Medieval Britain and Ireland, 800 - 1200



David Wyatt



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Slaves and Warriors in Medieval Britain and
Ireland, 800–1200

The Northern World

North Europe and the Baltic *c.* 400–1700 AD
Peoples, Economies and Cultures

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Slaves and Warriors in Medieval Britain and Ireland, 800–1200

By
David Wyatt



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*This work is dedicated to my son, Jack;
I hope you will live to see a world free from slavery.*

All my love

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AC</i>	<i>Annales Cambriæ</i> , Williams ab Ithel, J. (ed.) (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860)
<i>AHR</i>	<i>American History Review</i>
<i>AI</i>	<i>Annals of Inisfallen</i> , Mac Airt, S. (ed. and trans.) (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1951)
<i>ALC</i>	<i>Annals of Loch Cé</i> , Hennessy, W.M. (ed. and trans.) (London: Longman, 1871)
<i>ALI</i>	<i>Ancient Laws of Ireland</i> , 6 vols., O'Donovan, J. and Curry, E.O. (eds.) (Dublin: printed for H.M.S.O., published by A. Thom, London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1865–1901)
<i>ALIW</i>	<i>Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales</i> , 2 vols., Owen, A. (ed. and trans.) (London: Record Commission, 1841)
<i>ANS</i>	<i>Anglo-Norman Studies</i> (Proceedings of the Battle Conference) (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer)
<i>AoC</i>	<i>Annála Connact, The Annals of Connacht</i> , Martin Freeman, A. (ed. and trans.) (Dublin: Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, 1944)
<i>AP</i>	<i>Armes Prydein: The Prophecy of Britain from the Book of Taliesin</i> , Williams, I. (ed.) and Bromwich, R. (trans.) (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1972)
<i>AQ</i>	<i>Anthropological Quarterly</i>
<i>ASC</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> , Swanton, M.J. (ed. and trans.) (London: Dent, 1996)
<i>ASC MSA</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, a Collaborative Edition MS A</i> , vol. iii, Bately, J.M. (ed.) (Woodbridge: D S Brewer, 1986)
<i>ASC MSC</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, a Collaborative Edition MS C</i> , vol. v, O'Brien O'Keeffe, K. (ed.) (Cambridge: D S Brewer, 2000)
<i>ASC MSD</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, a Collaborative Edition MS D</i> , vol. vi, Cubbin, G.P. (ed.) (Cambridge: D S Brewer, 1996)
<i>ASD</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon Dictionary</i> , Bosworth, J. and Toller, T.N. (eds.) (London: Oxford University Press, 1898)
<i>ASP</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon Prose</i> , Swanton, M. (ed. and trans.) (London: Dent, 1975)

- ASWA* *The Anglo-Saxon World, An Anthology*, Crossley-Holland, K. (ed. and trans.) (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1999)
- ASW* *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, Whitelock, D. (ed. and trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930)
- AU* *Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)*, Mac Airt, S. and Mac Niocaill, G. (eds. and trans.) (Dublin: Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, 1983)
- BIHR* *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*
- ByS* *Brenhinedd y Saesson, The Kings of the Saxons*, Jones, T. (ed. and trans.) (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1971)
- ByT* *Brut y Tywysogyon or The Chronicle of the Princes. Red Book of Hergest Version*, Jones, T. (ed. and trans.) (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955)
- CaO* *Culhwch ac Olwen*, Bromwich, R. and Simon Evans, D. (eds.) (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988)
- CB* “*Cath Bóinde*”, O’Neill, J. (ed. and trans.), *Eriu*, 2, 1905, pp. 175–185
- CC* “*The Conception of Conchobar*”, Meyer, K. (ed. and trans.), *Review Celtique*, 6, 1883–1885, pp. 173–186
- CED* *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, 3 vols., Haddan, A.W. and Stubbs, W. (eds.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869–1878)
- CG* *Críth Gablach*, Binchy, D.A. (ed.) (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1941)
- CIH* *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, 6 vols., Binchy, D.A. (ed.) (Dublin: Institiúid Ard-Léinn Bhaile Átha Cliath, 1978)
- CJW* *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, 3 vols., Darlington, R.R. and McGurk, P. (eds. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995–1998)
- CLBL* *Calendar of Letter Books Preserved Among the Archives of the City of London at the Guildhall*, Sharpe, R.R. (ed.) (London: City of London Corporation, 1907)
- CMCS* *Cambridge Celtic Medieval Studies*
- CoK* *The Cycles of the Kings*, Dillon, M. (ed. and trans.) (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1946)
- CRSHR* *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, 4 vols., Howlett, R. (ed.) (London: Longman, 1884–1889)
- CSD* *Councils and Synods with other documents relating to the English Church*, vol. i, Whitelock, D. et al. (eds.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981)

- CSI* *Complete Sagas of the Icelanders*, 5 vols., Hreinsson, Vidar et al. (eds.) (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Pub, 1997)
- CSN* *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, 2 vols., Skene, W.F. (ed.) and Skene, F.J.H. (trans.) (Lampeter, Dyfed: Llanerch, 1993, first published Edinburgh 1872)
- DCD* *De Civitate Dei. Saint Augustine, The City of God against the Pagans*, 7 vols., McCracken, G.E. et al. (eds. and trans.) (London: Heinemann, 1957–1972)
- DGRS* Richard of Hexham, *De Gestis Regis Stephani* in *CRSHR*, vol. iii
- DNC* Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium, Courtiers Trifles*, James, M.R. et al. (eds. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983)
- DPL* *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, Hawthorne, G.F. and Martin, R.P. (eds.) (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993)
- EB* *The Exeter Book*, Krapp, G.P. and Dobbie, E.V.K. (eds.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936)
- EdE* *L'Estoire des Engles solum la Translacion Maistre Geffrei Gaimar*, Hardy, T.D. and Martin, C.T. (eds.) (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1888)
- ÉC* *Études Celtique*
- EER* *Encomium Emmæ Reginae*, Campbell, A. (ed. and trans.), *Camden Society*, lxxii (London, 1949)
- EH* Gerald of Wales, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, Scott, A.B. and Martin, F.X. (eds. and trans.) (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1978)
- EHD* *English Historical Documents 500–1042*, Whitelock, D. (ed. and trans.) (London: Eyre Methuen, 1968)
- EHEP* Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Colgrave, B. and Mynors, R.A.B. (ed. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969)
- EHR* *English historical Review*
- EmNEM* *Echtra mac N-Echach Muigmedón in CoK*
- ESSH* *Early Sources in Scottish History*, 2 vols., Anderson, A.O. (ed. and trans.) (London/Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1922)
- GG* *Gesta Guillelmi of William of Poitiers*, Davis, R.H.C. and Chibnall, M. (eds. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998)
- GH* *Gesta Herewardi* in *EdE*
- GND* *Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis and Robert of Torigni*, 2 vols., Van Houts, E. (ed. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press/New York: Oxford University Press, 1992–1995)

<i>GRA</i>	Willam of Malmesbury, <i>Gesta Regvm Anglorvm</i> , <i>The History of the English Kings</i> , Mynors, R.A.B. et al. (eds. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999)
<i>HA</i>	Henry of Huntingdon, <i>Historia Anglorum</i> , Greenway, D. (ed. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996)
<i>HEA</i>	William of Newburgh, <i>The History of English Affairs</i> , Book I, Walsh, P.G. and Kennedy, M.J. (eds. and trans.) (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1988)
<i>HGK</i>	<i>Historia Gruffud vab Kenan</i> , <i>The History of Gruffudd ap Cynan</i> , Simon Evans, D. (ed. and trans.) (Llanerch: Llanerch Enterprises, 1990)
<i>HKE</i>	<i>A History of the Kings of England</i> (attributed to Symeon of Durham) Stevenson, J. (ed. and trans.) (Llanerch: Llanerch Enterprises, 1987, orig. 1858)
<i>HoF</i>	Gregory of Tours, <i>History of the Franks</i> , 2 vols. Dalton, O.M. (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927)
<i>HSJ</i>	<i>Haskins Society Journal</i>
<i>HTI</i>	Gerald of Wales, <i>History and Topography of Ireland</i> , O'Meara, J.J. (ed. and trans.) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982)
<i>IED</i>	Cleasby, R. and Vigfusson, G. <i>An Icelandic-English Dictionary</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957)
<i>IK/DK</i>	Gerald of Wales, <i>Itinerarium Kambriæ et Descriptio Kambriæ</i> , Dimock, J.F. (ed.) (Weisbaden: Kraus, 1964, orig. published London: Longman, 1868)
<i>IP</i>	<i>The Irish Penitentials</i> , Bieler, L. (ed. and trans.) (Dublin: Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, 1963)
<i>Íslend/Land</i>	<i>Íslendingabók</i> , <i>Landnámabók</i> , 2 vols., Benediktsson, Jakob (ed.) (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka forritafélag, 1968)
<i>JCS</i>	<i>Journal of Celtic Studies</i>
<i>JDW</i>	Gerald of Wales, <i>The Journey Through Wales/Description of Wales</i> , Thorpe, L. (ed. and trans.) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978)
<i>JEGP</i>	<i>Journal of English and German Philology</i>
<i>JMH</i>	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i>
<i>JRSAI</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland</i>
<i>LEEK</i>	<i>The Laws of the Earliest English Kings</i> , Attenborough, F.L. (ed. and trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922)
<i>LHA</i>	<i>Lincolnshire History & Archaeology</i>

- LHD* *The Law of Hywel Dda*, Jenkins, D. (ed. and trans.) (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1986)
- LHP* *Leges Henrici Primi*, Downer, L.J. (ed. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972)
- LJS* *The Letters of John of Salisbury (1153–1161)*, Millor, W.J. et al. (eds. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), vol. i.
- LKE* *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry 1*, Robertson, A.J. (ed. and trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925)
- LnC* *Lebor na Cert, The Book of Rights*, Dillon, M. (ed. and trans.) (Dublin: Irish Texts Society, 1962)
- LoL* *The Letters of Lanfranc*, Clover, H. and Gibson, M. (eds. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979)
- LS* “*The Saga of the People of Laxardal*” in *Complete Sagas of the Icelanders*, 5 vols., Hreinsson, Vidar et al. (eds.) (Reykjavík, Leifur Eiríksson Pub, 1997), vol. v, pp. 1–119
- LSCS* Brundage, J.A., *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1987)
- LSF* *The Laws of the Salian Franks*, Fischer Drew, K. (ed. and trans.) (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991)
- Mab* *The Mabinogion*, Davies, S. (ed. and trans.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)
- Mabinog* *The Mabinogion*, Jones, G. and Jones, T. (eds. and trans.) (London: Dent, 1974)
- MHP* *Medieval Handbooks of Penance. A Translation of the Principal Libri Poenitentiales and Selections from Related Documents*, McNeill, J.T. and Gamer, H.M. (eds. and trans.) (orig. 1938, reprinted New York: Columbia University Press, 1990)
- Moriuht* Warner of Rouen, *Moriuht: A Norman Latin Poem from the Early Eleventh Century*, McDonough, C.J. (ed. and trans.) (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1995)
- MS* *Medieval Studies*
- Ngl* *Norges gamle love*, 5 vols., Keyser, R. and Munch, P.A. (eds.) (Christiania, 1846–1895)
- NU* “*Nóiden Ulaid, The Debility of the Ulidians*”, Hull, V. (ed. and trans.), *Celtica*, vol. viii, Dublin, 1968, pp. 1–42
- OV* *Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, 6 vols., Chibnall, M. (ed. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969–1980)
- P&P* *Past & Present*

<i>PHCC</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
<i>Poli.</i>	John of Salisbury, <i>Policraticus</i> (Latin edition), 2 vols., Webb, C.C.I. (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon, 1909) (English translation) Nederman, J. (ed. and trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)
<i>PoP</i>	" <i>The Poem of Prophecies</i> ", Knott, E. (ed. and trans.), <i>Eriu</i> , vol. xviii, 1958, pp. 72–84
<i>PT</i>	<i>The Penitential of Theodore</i> , Latin edition in <i>CED</i> , vol. iii and English translation in <i>MHP</i>
<i>PRIA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy</i>
<i>PVC</i>	<i>Prose & Verse Chronicles in ESSH</i>
<i>RC</i>	<i>Review Celtique</i>
<i>Ríg</i>	<i>Rígsþula</i> in <i>The Poetic Edda</i> , vol. ii, Dronke, U. (ed. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997)
<i>SAEC</i>	<i>Scottish Annals from English Chroniclers</i> , Anderson, A.O. (ed. and trans.) (London: D.N. Nutt, 1908)
<i>Scotichron.</i>	<i>Scotichronicon</i> , vol. ii., Watt, D.E.R. et al. (eds. and trans.) (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989)
<i>SCR</i>	<i>Scottish History Review</i>
<i>SGS</i>	<i>Scottish Gaelic Studies</i>
<i>SLAA</i>	Wulfstan II of York, <i>Sermo Lupi ad Anglos</i> , Whitelock, D. (ed.) (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1976)
<i>SMOO</i>	<i>Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia</i> , 2 vols., Arnold, T. (ed.) (London: Longman, 1882–1885)
<i>SS</i>	<i>Scandinavian Studies</i>
<i>Ssoc.</i>	<i>Surtees Society</i>
<i>TBC</i>	<i>Táin Bó Cúalnge</i> , Rahilly, C.O. (ed. and trans.) (Dublin: Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, 1970)
<i>TBDD</i>	<i>Tógail Bruidne Da Derga</i> , Knott, E. (ed.) (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1936)
<i>TC</i>	<i>Técosca Cormaic, The Instructions of King Cormac Mac Airt</i> , Meyer, K. (ed. and trans.), <i>Royal Irish Academy, Todd Lecture Series</i> , vol. xv (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, 1909)
<i>TE</i>	" <i>Tochmarc Emire</i> ", Meyer, K. (ed. and trans.) in <i>RC</i> , xi, 1890, pp. 443–457
<i>TF</i>	<i>Annals of Ireland, Three Fragments</i> , O'Donovan, J. (ed. and trans.) (Dublin: Archaeological and Celtic Society, 1860)
<i>TH/EH</i>	Gerald of Wales, <i>Topographia Hibernica et Expugnatio Hibernica</i> , Dimock, J.F. (ed.) (Wiesbaden, 1964, orig. printed London: Longman, 1867)

- Thes.OE* Roberts, J. et al. (eds.), *A Thesaurus of Old English*, 2 vols. (London: King's College, 1995)
- THSC* *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*
- TLLE* *Three lives of the Last Englishmen*, Swanton, M. (ed. and trans.) (New York/London: Garland, 1984)
- TRHS* *Transactions Royal Historical Society*
- TSCP* *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, Plummer, C. and Earle, J. (eds.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892–1899)
- TT* *Trias thaumaturgae*/, Colgan, J. (ed.) (Dublin, 1997, Facsimile reprint of 1647 ed. Louvain: Cornelium Coenestenum)
- VE* *The Life of King Edward who rests at Westminster*, Barlow, F. (ed. and trans.) (2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992)
- VGC* *Vita Griffini Filii Conani: The Medieval Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan*, Russell, P. (ed. and trans.) (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005)
- VPSB* “*Vitae Prima Sanctae Brigitae*”, Connolly, S. (ed. and trans.), *JRSAL*, vol. 119, 1989, pp. 5–49
- VSHSB* *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogiae*, Wade-Evans, A.W. (ed. and trans.) (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1944)
- VWWM* *Vita Wulfstani of William of Malmesbury*, Darlington, R.R. (ed.) (London: Royal Historical Society, 1928)
- WHR* *Welsh History Review*
- WoÆ* *The Will of Æthelgifu; A Tenth Century Anglo-Saxon Manuscript*, Whitelock, D. (ed. and trans.) (Oxford: the Roxburghe Club, 1968)
- ZCP* *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*

CHAPTER ONE

SLAVERY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

Medieval Slavery, Modern Sensibilities

Modern preconceptions and sensibilities have profoundly affected historical interpretations of the medieval institution of slavery. Paradoxically, these same preconceptions and sensibilities have been moulded and shaped by the discourse on slavery in the modern era. The nineteenth-century struggle to abolish slavery lies at the very heart of this paradox. Abolitionism has been widely regarded by historians as a defining watershed in British civilisation. Modern sensibilities concerning freedom, democracy, individualism, and the superiority of western civilisation would all appear to have stemmed from that “unweary, unostentatious and inglorious crusade.”¹ The abolitionist’s triumph thereby severed one of the final links between modern industrial Britain and the less savoury aspects of its more barbarous medieval past. The disturbing nature of New World slavery and the way in which it was eradicated gave rise to a powerful and emotive cultural antipathy towards the institution of slavery. This antipathy has helped to obscure memories of Britain’s involvement in the establishment and perpetuation of the New World slave trade. Indeed, it has resulted in a kind of collective historical amnesia concerning the fact that Britain’s industrial revolution was financed primarily by the profits from that trade. The events and debates surrounding the 2007 bicentennial of the abolition of the British slave trade have shed some light on these issues. Nevertheless, the bicentennial commemorations generally served to reinforce longstanding perceptions associating Britain with abolitionism and progress rather than with tainted slave-trade profits and the horrors of the Middle Passage. Yet, even the apparently noble cause of abolition had certain less pleasant side effects that have been overlooked by the nation’s historians. The success of the abolition movement contributed significantly towards the construction of a ‘superior’

¹ W.E.H. Lecky, *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne*, vol. i (London: Longmans, Green, 1911), p. 153.

and ‘civilising’ ideology that was subsequently employed as an excuse for aggressive imperial expansionism and colonial domination. This in turn intensified racist attitudes towards the indigenous populations of Britain’s colonies and created a legacy of inequality that continues to plague us to this day. The moral outrage that accompanies the modern antipathy towards slavery would have been harder to discern in any British community prior to the eighteenth century. Moreover, within the societies of medieval Britain slavery was regarded as a necessary institution; essential for the perpetuation social and cultural order.

This chapter will attempt to improve our understanding of the significance of slavery in medieval Britain by first seeking to understand how modern attitudes and sensibilities have distorted our view of that institution. It is important that we recognise how medievalists have constructed the institution of slavery and acknowledge the effect that abolitionist ideology has had on these constructions. Modern ideological perspectives and economic rationales have immeasurably distorted our view of medieval slavery. A critique of these economic approaches will, therefore, be provided using Anglo-Saxon society as a case study. This critique will then be related to some suggestions regarding the alternative and, perhaps, more fruitful lines of enquiry that will be pursued during the course of this study.

Until recently scholars of medieval history have rarely discussed slavery. Indeed, many medieval historians have chosen to ignore the subject altogether.² Those historians who have dealt with slavery have attempted to sanitise our view of the institution. One consequence of this has been a tendency to depict the enslaved as being either in need of or deserving of this servile status. The nineteenth century English historian E.A. Freeman portrayed enslavement as a kind of medieval

² In a chapter entitled “The Social Organisation of the Early English Kingdoms” C. Oman gives one brief mention to the “the mere domestic slave” in his *England before the Norman Conquest: Being a History of the Celtic, Roman and Anglo-Saxon Periods down to the Year AD 1066* (London: Methuen, 1910). Only four references to slaves appear in Sir Frank Stenton’s seminal study *Anglo-Saxon England*, first published in 1943 (2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947, 3rd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). R.A. Arnold makes only a passing reference to slavery in his *Social History of England 55 BC to AD 1215* (London: Constable Young Toronto: Longmans, 1967). Similarly, the Welsh historian John Davies barely mentions the existence of slavery in medieval Welsh society in his *A History of Wales* (London: Allen Lane, 1993). In addition, the Scottish historian G.W.S. Barrow makes hardly any reference to slavery or slave raiding in his *Kingdom of the Scots, Government, Church and Society from the Eleventh to the Fourteenth Century* (London: Edward Arnold, 1973). For Irish examples see below.

welfare measure.³ He argued that when famine struck Anglo Saxon England, the destitute “became slaves to any one who would feed them, sometimes, when happier days had come, to be set free by the charity of their masters.”⁴ Esmé Wingfield-Stratford, who published her *History of British Civilisation* in the 1920’s, argued that the Anglo-Saxons were “a practical folk” who took slaves rather than slaughtering everyone.⁵ Dorothy Whitelock felt that the fate of slavery fell most commonly upon the more undesirable elements of medieval society such as convicted criminals or individuals who defaulted on their debts.⁶ Other historians have attempted to distance the societies of medieval Britain from the institution of slavery by attributing its existence to the influence of other ethnic groups. For example, in his *Early Medieval Ireland 400–1200* the Irish historian Dáibhí Ó Cróinín argued that the growth of the slave trade in medieval Ireland was “...a less savoury influence attributed to the Vikings.”⁷ He goes on to admit that slaves were not unknown in

³ D. Wyatt, “The Significance of Slavery: Alternative Approaches to Anglo-Saxon Slavery” in *ANS*, xxxiii (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2001), pp. 328–347, 328–329.

⁴ E.A. Freeman, *The History of the Norman Conquest*, vol. iv (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1875–1879), p. 292. Glancy has identified very similar sanitising impulses in the historiography regarding the ancient world, see J.A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 84. See also T. Taylor, “Ambushed by a Grotesque: Archaeology, Slavery and the Third Paradigm” in M. Parker Pearson and I.J.N. Thorpe (eds.), *Warfare, Violence and Slavery in Prehistory: Proceedings of a Prehistoric Society Conference at Sheffield University* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2005), pp. 225–233.

⁵ E. Wingfield-Stratford, *The History of British Civilisation*, vol. i (London: Routledge, 1928), p. 34, Wyatt “Significance”, pp. 328–329.

⁶ D. Whitelock, *The Beginnings of English Society* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1952), p. 112. Whitelock was following the views of John Kemble writing in the nineteenth century, Kemble argued “It is moreover to be borne in mind that a very large proportion of the *þeowas* at any given time, were in reality criminal serfs, convicts expiating their offences by their sufferings.” *The Saxons in England* (London: B. Quaritch, 1876), p. 213. Penal slaves are mentioned in many of the Anglo-Saxon wills but are often referred to separately from the mass of other slaves. They appear to have received preferable treatment as they were more likely to be manumitted upon the death of their master, see *The Will of Wynflæd* (950?), pp. 12–13, *The Will of Ælfeah* (968 x 971), pp. 23–25, *The Will of Archbishop Ælfric* (1003 x 1004), pp. 53–55 in *The Anglo-Saxon Wills*, D. Whitelock (ed. and trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930). This suggests that non-hereditary penal slaves helped to supplement existing slave labour. This may, in some ways, be comparable with forms of debt and penal slavery found in many other pre-modern slaving societies, for examples see O. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 126–129, Wyatt, “Significance”, p. 329.

⁷ D. Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland 400–1200* (London/New York: Longman, 1995), pp. 268–269. Similarly, Holm notes that although the Irish kings became involved in slave raiding during the tenth century these leaders “...seem to have learnt the practice

early Irish society but qualifies this with the comment: "...there is on the other hand no evidence for a trade in slaves in Ireland—though there is for England and its continental neighbours."⁸ In an early article examining the slave trade in medieval Wales, Bromberg argued that "...it was probably the Viking trader-raider who turned the attention of the Welshman to the slave trade."⁹ Similarly, Fisher in his *Anglo-Saxon Age c. 400–1042* argued that the Anglo-Saxon exportation of slaves was a result of "the new influx of Danes" which "had given new vitality to old bad habits".¹⁰

Even those historians who acknowledge the significance of slavery for the communities of medieval Britain have often, consciously or unconsciously, attempted to temper this view. As a result they have issued slightly awkward or contradictory statements on the subject. In his study *Scotland: The Making of a Kingdom* A.A.M. Duncan acknowledges that during the eleventh century

...the 'good' men of Scotia went off to rustle Northumbrian cattle and plunder the treasuries of Northumbrian Churches, and perhaps, too to drive men north into slavery.¹¹

Yet, in a later reference to this very comment Duncan felt compelled to remark, somewhat defensively, that

It is inadequate to characterise tenth to eleventh-century [Scottish] society as barbarian and primitive, though it had something of both qualities; perhaps the most neutral description is archaic.¹²

This later qualification would appear to reflect the author's dim view of native Scottish slave-raiding practices; a form of behaviour which he clearly associated, more ordinarily, with only 'backward' and 'primitive' societies. Furthermore, Henry Loyn qualified his well-known statement

of slave-taking from the Vikings." See P. Holm, "The Slave Trade of Dublin, Ninth to Twelfth Centuries", *Peritia*, vol. v, 1986, pp. 315–345, p. 330.

⁸ Ó Cróinín, *Medieval Ireland*, pp. 268–269.

⁹ E.I. Bromberg, "Wales and the Medieval Slave Trade", *Speculum*, xviii, 1942, pp. 263–269, 263.

¹⁰ D.J.V. Fisher, *The Anglo-Saxon Age c. 400–1042* (1st edn. Harlow: Longman, 1973, 2nd edn. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1992), p. 333. Similarly, Wingfield-Stratford argued that the Danes dealt Anglo-Saxon civilisation a blow that resulted in Anglo-Saxon lords making fortunes by seizing people and selling them as slaves, *Civilisation*, vol. i, p. 134.

¹¹ A.A.M. Duncan, *Scotland: The Making of the Kingdom* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1975), p. 114, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 329.

¹² *Ibid.*

that, "Right to the end of its days, Anglo-Saxon England was a slave owning community", by later arguing "...the slave trade operated to feed the needs of two distinct communities: the Moslems...and the Scandinavians."¹³ Yet, even the most conservative estimates suggest that at least ten percent of the population of England were still slaves in 1086.¹⁴ Indeed, the sources reveal that all of the societies of medieval Britain were trading in and holding slaves into the twelfth century. Nevertheless, the slave holding nature of these societies has been consistently denied or played down by historians. In his ground-breaking study *Slavery in Early Medieval England*, published in the mid-nineteen nineties, David Pelteret provides substantial evidence for indigenous slave raiding activities during the Anglo-Saxon period. Yet, flying somewhat in the face of this evidence, he issues the rather confusing statement that "...from the ninth to the eleventh century it was mainly Norseman who enslaved many in England."¹⁵

The historical arguments that continue to rage over the nature and importance of both ancient and medieval slavery cannot be cleanly detached from the debates concerning New World slavery. The idea of slavery still has a great psychological impact upon historians. This is because any discussion of medieval slavery is intimately related to some of modern British society's most cherished values and also because the invidious legacy of New World slavery still looms large.¹⁶ The psychological impact of New World slavery is clearly discernable in the historical discourse on the institution in the medieval period. Nearly every medieval historian who has examined this institution has felt obliged or compelled to compare or contrast it with slavery in the New World.¹⁷ For example, the English historian, E.A. Freeman

¹³ H.R. Loyn, *Anglo Saxon England and the Norman Conquest* (London: Longmans, 1962), pp. 86-88.

¹⁴ For slaves in Domesday see J. Moore, "Domesday Slavery" in *ANS*, xi (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1988) pp. 191-221, 193.

¹⁵ D.A.E. Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1995), pp. 70-72. It is not denied that the Scandinavians established a lucrative slave supply network, which facilitated and probably encouraged slaving activity. There is little evidence, however, to suggest that Anglo-Saxon slave holding had in any way diminished prior to the Scandinavian incursions. Indeed, as we shall see, the Anglo-Saxons remained implicitly involved in the slave trade until it declined in significance during the twelfth century, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 329.

¹⁶ Wyatt, "Significance", p. 330.

¹⁷ J. Millar, *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (1st published 1771, reprinted Bristol: Thoemmes Tokyo, 1990), pp. 244-294. Freeman, *Norman Conquest*, vol. iv, p. 48. H. Trevor-Roper, *The Rise of Christian Europe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965), pp. 92-93.

made a point of differentiating between Anglo-Saxon and New World slavery under a marginal note entitled “The difference between white and black slavery.”¹⁸ Similarly, Andrew Lang, a Scottish contemporary of Freeman, commented that the *cumelache* (fugitive bondman) that feature in the medieval Scottish legal tracts were not to be thought of as a “...bondman running away to town under cover of night, like a negro slave making for the Northern States...” but rather as “...a migration of the bondman by the lord’s assent, and with his sanction.”¹⁹ Whilst discussing the existence of slavery in medieval Wales, the nineteenth-century Welsh antiquarian, Charles Wilkins remarked with some horror: “How often have we not expended our sympathy in the commiseration of the African; but here was a condition on our soil still more hideous.”²⁰

More recently, Henry Loyn clearly felt that enlightened medieval individuals would have been equally horrified by the slave markets of their day, remarking that “Bristol and London in 1050 were notorious in much the same way as Liverpool was to become in 1750.”²¹ Moreover, in his book *The Flowering of Ireland* Schermann argues that a decree made by the council of Armagh in 1170 prohibiting the slave trade in Ireland “...was an astonishingly progressive act for its time” which was achieved “seven hundred years before the rest of Europe and the United States took the same action.”²² Modern sensibilities concerning slavery have also affected views of the institution in other disciplines. For example, the archaeologist B.G. Scott interprets two

M. Bloch, *Slavery and Serfdom in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley/London: University of California Press, 1975), p. 5. Pelteret, *Slavery*, p. 4.

¹⁸ Freeman, *Norman Conquest*, vol. iv, p. 481. Trevor-Roper in his *Rise of Christian Europe* felt that “The slave kidnappers and slave-traders who fed the sugar mills of Brazil and the plantations of North America were the Christian equivalent of the Vikings and Jews who had fed the Moslem lands in the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries.” Trevor Roper, *Rise*, pp. 92–93.

¹⁹ A. Lang, *A History of Scotland from the Roman Occupation*, vol. i (Edinburgh/London: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1900), p. 141, for a similar comparison see also p. 137. It is difficult to ascertain whether the *cumelache* were actually slaves. Nevertheless, they are clearly classed alongside *servi* in a mandate of David I c. 1126, see A.C. Lawrie, *Early Scottish Charters prior to 1153* (1905), reference taken from Duncan, *Scotland*, p. 328. A translated version of this charter is extant in *A Source Book of Scottish History*, vol. i, W. Croft Dickinson et al. (eds. and trans.) (London: Nelson, 1952), p. 86.

²⁰ C. Wilkins, *Wales, Past and Present* (Merthyr: Harry Wood Southey, 1870), p. 240.

²¹ H.R. Loyn, *The Free Anglo-Saxon* (Cardiff: Cardiff University Press, 1975), p. 4.

²² K. Scherman, *The Flowering of Ireland, Saints, Scholars and Kings* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1981), pp. 235, 281. This decree only freed English slaves held in Ireland, it did not abolish insular slavery there.

seventh-century Irish slave collars in the following manner: “Although commonly referred to as ‘slave collars’, it would seem odd that such fine pieces would have been put to such a lowly use.” Instead he feels that they “...might have been used for favourite animals as a way of showing the esteem of the master for his pet.” (See fig. 1).²³ Evidently Scott had a clear mental image of what being a slave entailed and it had a lot more to do with ideas about the horrors of the Middle Passage and gang-style slavery of the New World than it did with the prestigious nature of slave holding in Old Irish society.²⁴

Such anachronistic and misleading archaeological interpretations regarding slave related artefacts are nothing new. A number of late-Roman slave collars inscribed with Christian iconography appear to have been deeply unsettling for the nineteenth-century scholars who initially examined them. Their resulting interpretations of these artefacts are strikingly similar to Scott’s view of the Lagore collars. Like Scott, they seem to have preferred to interpret these chains as dog collars rather than acknowledge the slave holding nature of their early Christian forebears.²⁵ Furthermore, a recent reinterpretation of the spectacular Iron-Age votive deposits at Llyn Cerrig Bach on Anglesey has revealed how significant archaeological evidence for human sacrifice at the site was rigorously suppressed by the original excavator Cyril Fox. Fox, who supervised recovery of these deposits between 1942 and 1945, appears to have considered that such a find would not sit well with Britain’s war-time self-image as the champion of the civilised world. His suppression of this fascinating evidence is particularly relevant for this discussion

²³ B.G. Scott, “Iron ‘Slave Collars’ from Lagore Crannog, County Meath”, *PRIA* 78, 1978, pp. 213–230, 228–229. Scott’s interpretation has received staunch support from Leslie Alcock see “The Activities of Potentates in Celtic Britain AD 500–800: A Positivist Approach” in *Power and Politics in Early Medieval Ireland*, S.T. Driscoll and M.R. Níeke (eds.) (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), pp. 22–47.

²⁴ Aldhouse-Green has subsequently highlighted the highly symbolic nature of such slave chains within late Iron-Age British contexts and discussed their association with ritual displays of humiliation, defeat and human sacrifice see M. Aldhouse-Green, “Chaining and Shaming: Images of Defeat, from Llyn Cerrig Bach to Sarmizegetusa”, *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 23, 3, pp. 319–340, 320–321 and “Ritual Bondage, Violence, Slavery and Sacrifice in Later European Prehistory” Parker Pearson and Thorpe *Warfare, Violence and Slavery*, pp. 155–163, 157–158, Wyatt, “Significance”, p. 330.

²⁵ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, pp. 9, 88. One such collar from Sardinia bears a Christian chi-ro monogram and the name of the slave’s owner, an archdeacon (*archidiaconus*) named Felix, see F. Hugh Thompson, *The Archaeology of Greek and Roman Slavery* (London: Duckworth, 1988), p. 240 and G. Sotgiu, “Un collare di schiavo rinvenuto in Sardegna”, *Archaeologia Classica*, 25–26, 1973–1974, pp. 688–697.

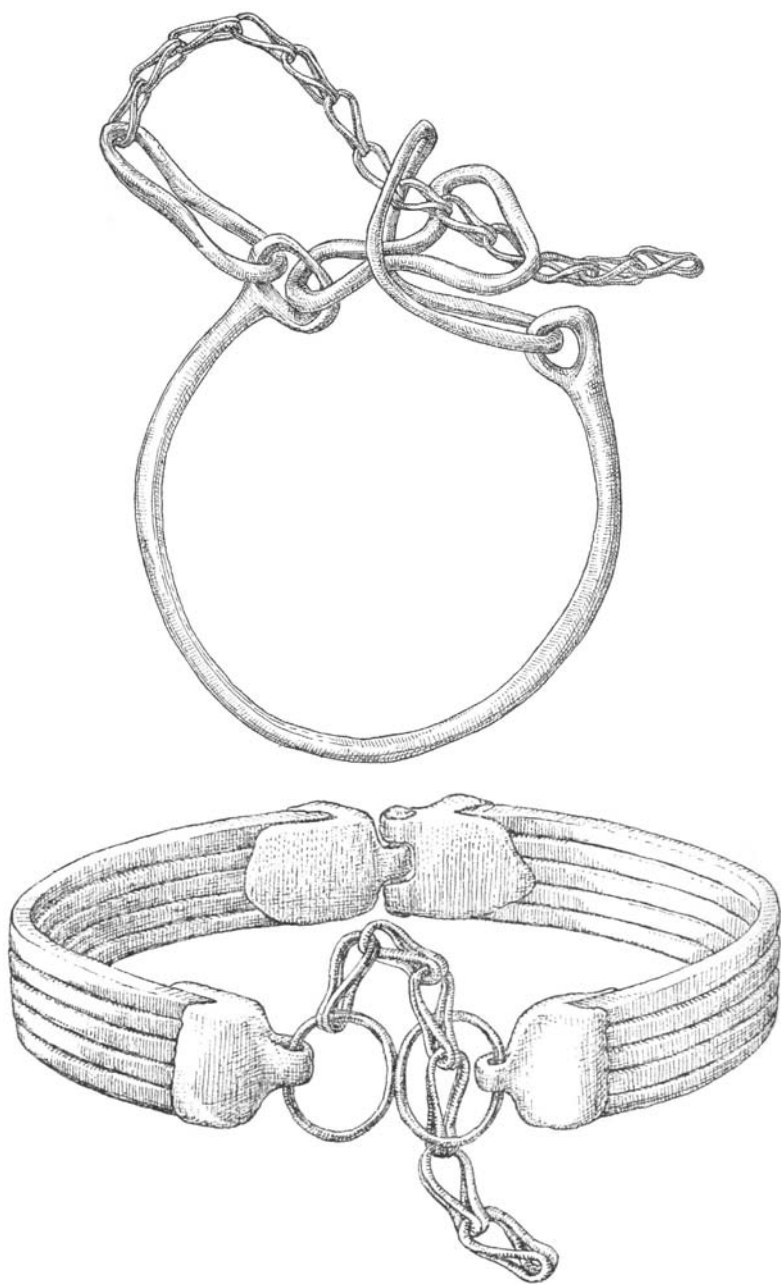


Figure 1. Two Iron Slave Collars from Lagore Crannog, illustrations from B.G. Scott, “Iron ‘Slave Collars’ from Lagore Crannog, County Meath”, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 78, 1978, pp. 213–230.

because enslaved war captives were the most likely victims for such a sacrifice. The Llyn Cerrig Bach deposits also included an ornate slave chain not at all dissimilar to the ones found at Lagore Crannog.²⁶

In his seminal study *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* Moses Finley has argued that

No one today need feel ashamed of his Greek or Roman slave ancestors, nor are there any current social or political ills that can be blamed on ancient slavery.²⁷

Finley's statement is undoubtedly true, yet our antipathy towards slavery, as constructed through the nineteenth-century anti-slavery ideology, is extremely pervasive. As the Greek and Roman civilisations are regarded to be the source and inspiration for modern western democracy it is not difficult to understand how emotive anti-slavery sentiments might have muddled the waters of earlier historiography.²⁸ Such sentiments appear to have affected historiography in general and this is unsurprising given that the existence of ancient slavery was held up as a justification for the institution of slavery in both the medieval and the early modern periods. If one follows Finley's argument to its logical conclusion then one must ask in what period should we begin to feel ashamed of our slave, or indeed, our slave-holding ancestors?²⁹ It is, therefore, important that we understand and acknowledge how modern concepts of freedom and feelings of remorse concerning New World slavery have configured the modern historiography of medieval slavery. Only after we have recognised and attempted to take account of such modern preconceptions will we be more able to understand the significance of slavery for the medieval societies in which it existed.³⁰ This was point

²⁶ See Aldhouse Green, "Chaining and Shaming" and "Ritual Bondage", p. 159, P. Macdonald "Llyn Cerrig Bach: an Iron Age Votive Assembly" in S. Aldhouse-Green (ed.) *Art, Ritual and Death in Prehistory* (Cardiff: National Museum of Wales, 1996) pp. 32–33, M. Parker Pearson, "Great Sites: Llyn Cerrig Bach", *British Archaeology*, 53, June 2000, pp. 8–11. It should be noted that in some more recent studies archaeologists have accepted the significance of slavery for pre-historic communities, indeed Tim Taylor has recently argued that rather than searching for material evidence of slavery at a given site excavators should instead "...assume access to coerced labour as *a priori*, in the same way as access to drinking water is assumed", Taylor, "Ambushed by a Grotesque", p. 232.

²⁷ M.I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (Harmondsworth/Penguin, 1983), p. 11.

²⁸ Wyatt, "Significance", p. 331.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

was clearly recognised by Frederick Engels during the latter half of the nineteenth century. He remarked that

Without slavery, no Greek state, no Greek art and science; without slavery no Roman empire as the base, also no modern Europe... It costs little to inveigh against slavery and the like in general terms, and to pour high moral wrath on such infamies... But that tells us not one word as to how these institutions arose, why they existed, and what role they have played in history.³¹

Explaining Away Medieval Slavery

Following abolitionism, medieval slavery necessarily came to be portrayed as a barbaric, morally corrupting and uncivilised institution that was destined to disappear before the progress of Christian civilisation. Yet, as has been noted, the institution of slavery was at its most significant during those historical periods which are considered to be major watersheds in Western civilisation.³² Despite this fact, modern historians have played a crucial role in constructing sentiments that relate the demise of slavery directly with the progress of British and, more broadly, Western European (or more specifically northern French) civilisation. The predominant role of the historian in this process should be unsurprising if we accept D.B. Davis' comment that "...no realistic leader could seriously contemplate the abolition of New World slavery—except, on analogy with European slavery and serfdom, over a span of centuries."³³ Davis adds that, following abolition in the 1830's,

... the Western world was beginning to view slave labour as an intolerable obstacle to human progress—as an economic anachronism, as well as an offence against Christian morality and human rights.³⁴

The nineteenth century movement for abolition was founded upon powerful and emotive religious sentiments. It is unsurprising, then, that many nineteenth century historians regarded slavery to be a medieval institution that had been diminishing before the civilising influence of

³¹ K. Marx and F. Engels, *Werke* (Berlin, 1962), quote taken from Finley, *Ancient Slavery*, p. 12.

³² Patterson, *Social Death*, p. vii, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 331.

³³ D. B. Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 108.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

the Church. This was especially true for patriotically and religiously-minded historians in England; the home of abolitionism. The notion of the freedom loving Anglo-Saxon gave rise to a distinctly English strand in the historiographical tradition regarding the alleged decline and disappearance of slavery from Western Europe during the Middle Ages. For example, in 1849 John Kemble, one of the founders of the discipline of Anglo-Saxon studies, remarked that

...it was the especial honour and glory of Christianity, that while it broke the spiritual bonds of sin, it ever actively laboured to relieve the heavy burden of social servitude.³⁵

Similarly, the work of E.A. Freeman reveals the powerful influence that abolitionist ideology was exerting on late Victorian medieval historians. Freeman felt that there was a logical continuity between certain medieval English Churchmen, who had campaigned against the slave trade, and the modern abolitionists of his own day.

The completion of the good work in which Wulfstan (i.e. Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester 1010–1095) and Anselm (Archbishop of Canterbury 1093–1109) laboured, the abolition of first of the slave trade and then of slavery...forms a page in modern history which aptly follows on some pages of history in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.³⁶

As abolitionist zeal dissipated towards the end of the nineteenth century medieval historians began to explore more complex arguments in order to explain the alleged disappearance of slavery. Ideas regarding ecclesiastical influence upon the institution of slavery remained important. Yet these ideas came to be interwoven with the more pragmatic economic rationales of the age.³⁷ For example, F.W. Maitland argued that during the eleventh century legal and economic considerations had begun to blur the boundaries that had separated the slave from other men.³⁸ Maitland's Russian friend and correspondent, Paul Vinogradoff, also

³⁵ Kemble, *Saxons*, p. 211.

³⁶ Freeman, *Norman Conquest*, vol. iv, p. 481. Attitudes similar to Freeman's are evident in the historiographies of other regions of Britain. For example, the late nineteenth century Scottish historian Dugald Mitchell argued that the monks of Scotland "...did much to better the lot of the bondmen attached to their land, and to bring about their freedom." D. Mitchell, *A Popular History of the Highlands and Gaelic Scotland* (Paisley: A. Gardner, 1900), p. 201.

³⁷ Wyatt, "Significance", p. 332.

³⁸ F.W. Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond* (1st edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897 this edition Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 23–36, 325.

felt that economic factors had played an important role in the demise of slavery. Vinogradoff, a specialist in English medieval history, argued that slave labour would only have been economically viable upon large aristocratic estates. He, therefore, felt that the rise of manorialism had acted against slave exploitation because it encouraged the fragmentation of these estates.³⁹ Yet, both Maitland and Vinogradoff still regarded religious influence to have been an important factor which had acted against slavery in conjunction with these economic forces.⁴⁰

One of the most influential works on slavery, or rather the disappearance of the institution in the medieval Western context, originated, not in England but France. Its exponent was Marc Bloch; one of the founding fathers of the *Annales School*. Unsurprisingly, from Bloch's Gallic perspective, the communities of Northern France were the driving force behind the social changes which instigated the decline and eventual disappearance of slavery from Western Europe. Bloch's key paper on the subject, "Comment et Pourquoi Finit L'Esclavage Antique" ("How and why Ancient slavery came to an end"), was originally published in the late 1940's. This dramatically influential text, just over 28 pages long and devoid of footnote citations, was compiled by the editors of the *Annales d'Histoire Economique et Sociale* from an unpublished and unfinished paper which was found in Bloch's study following his execution at the hand of the Nazis in 1944.⁴¹ In it, Bloch contended that slave supplies had been gradually dwindling because of the spread of Christianity arguing that this had dramatically reduced the numbers of people outside the cultural group who could be legitimately enslaved. He, therefore, felt that it had become much harder to acquire slave labourers and that, as a result, the slave market had been affected by rampant inflation. Consequently, masters found that instead of pur-

³⁹ P. Vinogradoff, *The Growth of the Manor* (2nd edn, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1911), pp. 332–336, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 332.

⁴⁰ Vinogradoff's, *Growth of the Manor* gave purely economic reasons for the demise of slavery but in his later book *English Society in the Eleventh Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), he argued that these economic changes were greatly aided by a "mighty current of emancipation" which was encouraged by the Church, p. 468, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 332.

⁴¹ The paper was republished in the early 1960's in *Mélanges historiques* an edited collection of Bloch's work, see *Mélanges historiques* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1963), vol. i, pp. 261–285. It was later translated into English in the mid-nineteen seventies by W.R. Beer and constituted the first chapter of a highly influential edited collection of Bloch's research articles examining the disappearance of slavery from North Western Europe, *Slavery and Serfdom*, pp. 1–33.

chasing new slaves it was far more beneficial to tie their existing slave population to the land. They, therefore, fragmented their great estates and apportioned them out to their slaves. Following this the slaves then worked the land themselves and for the lord's profitability, and thereby gained a degree of autonomy. Bloch regarded this process as one that had empowered the slave because: "If he was particularly hard-working, or particularly shrewd, he ate better than his neighbour; insofar as there was a market, he could sell his surplus produce."⁴² I will return to Bloch's argument in a short while.

During the central decades of the twentieth century it seems that medieval British historians had very little to say about slavery. Stenton only briefly remarked upon the institution and whilst his contemporary Dorothy Whitelock did address the topic she largely reiterated nineteenth century sentiments regarding the positive effects of ecclesiastical influence.⁴³ Similarly, A.H. Williams only briefly mentioned the existence of slavery in medieval Welsh society and tempered this acknowledgement with the statement that "...it is doubtful whether this class formed a considerable section of Welsh society at any time."⁴⁴ This apparent regression of attitudes and general lack of interest in slavery may, in part, be attributed to the turbulence of the war years and a tendency to focus upon the more positive aspects of medieval British culture. However, one continental historian appears to have been far less squeamish in this respect. In the mid-nineteen fifties the Belgian scholar Charles Verlinden published the first volume of his monumental study *L'Esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale*, which focussed on France, Spain and the Balearic Islands.⁴⁵ Verlinden's interest centred, quite rightly, on the institution itself rather than attempting to explain its demise; examining key issues such as the sources for slaves, their legal status, their numbers and how they were employed.⁴⁶ Verlinden

⁴² Bloch, *Slavery and Serfdom*, pp. 1–8, Wyatt, "Significance", pp. 332–333.

⁴³ For example, Whitelock argued that Christian influence had encouraged manumission and "worked to mitigate the lot of the slave." Whitelock, *Beginnings*, p. 109, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 333.

⁴⁴ A.H. Williams, *An Introduction to the History of Wales*, vol. i (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1947), p. 134.

⁴⁵ C. Verlinden, *L'Esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale. I Péninsule ibérique-France* (Brugge: "Die Tempel", 1955), this study was followed two decades later by a second volume, *L'Esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale. II: Italie, colonies italiennes du Levant, Levant latin, Empire byzantin* (Ghent: Rijksuniversiteit te Gent, 1977).

⁴⁶ S. Painter, "Review of *L'Esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale, I: Péninsule Ibérique—France* by Charles Verlinden", *Speculum*, vol. 31, No. 4., Oct., 1956, pp. 730–731.

included an impressive corpus of primary evidence in his study which suggested that slavery was at least as significant in urban settings as it was in rural/agricultural locations in the Southern European context. He also produced substantial evidence highlighting the prolific numbers of female slaves being bought and sold, especially in Southern France. Yet, Verlinden failed to tease out the wider implications of these significant discoveries. Nonetheless, his study constituted a ground-breaking development in the discourse.⁴⁷

Interest in the medieval institution of slavery was further revived during the 1960's. In his *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest* Henry Loyn made his famous assertion (quoted earlier) concerning the slave owning nature of Anglo-Saxon society.⁴⁸ Like Bloch, Maitland and Vinogradoff before him, Loyn felt that economic change and ecclesiastical influence had acted in conjunction to erode the institution of slavery. He felt that individual clergymen had played an important role in ameliorating the plight of the slave although he admitted that the Church, as an institution, had not been directly concerned about slavery.⁴⁹ At the end of the 1960's the influential British economist John Hicks proposed that medieval slavery had disappeared as a result of demographic growth and the process of urbanisation. Hicks felt that increased population levels had placed greater pressure on rural land resulting in rural-urban migration. This, in turn, stimulated urban growth and created an excessive number of free labourers whose existence negated the need for slavery. Hicks recognised that the medieval Church had not been concerned about slavery; however, he argued that the Christian doctrine had acted against the enslavement of fellow Christians. Consequently, he felt that Western Europe had become insulated from a readily available supply of slaves during the middle ages. In Hicks' opinion, then, the laws of supply and demand had eroded the significance of the institution of slavery.⁵⁰

Hicks' argument was clearly influenced by Bloch's earlier work. Both regarded slavery to be an unviable institution in economic terms and

⁴⁷ Ibid., 730–731.

⁴⁸ Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 86, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 333.

⁴⁹ Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 238, 350, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 333.

⁵⁰ J. Hicks, *A Theory of Economic History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 134. During the 1980's Hicks' ideas regarding the effects of urbanisation received staunch support from John Moore who chose rightly to focus upon the institution of slavery rather than its demise in his survey entitled "Domesday Slavery", p. 205, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 333.

both felt that slave supplies were dwindling due to the spread of Christianity. In a sense, then, both men felt that the spread of Christianity had gone hand in hand with the spread of civilisation and the development of the market economy. The cornerstones of Bloch's argument, i.e. concerning the dwindling nature of slave supplies and the inherently unproductive nature of slave labour, have continued to be cited and approved by more recent historians from both the French and English historiographical perspectives. These include Bloch's countryman Pierre Bonassie in his *From Slavery to Feudalism in South-Western Europe* (1985) and David Pelteret in his *Slavery in Early Medieval England* (1995).⁵¹ Yet, interestingly, Bloch was not the first exponent of this influential argument. Indeed, it can be found in the very first early-modern historical writings concerning slavery during the eighteenth-century enlightenment, at the height of the British slave trade.⁵² Its exponent was John Millar, a student at the University of Glasgow who attended Adam Smith's *Lectures in Jurisprudence* (1762–1767) which have been extremely influential for modern economic philosophy.⁵³ In his *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (1771) Millar's explanation concerning the disappearance of medieval slavery follows Smith's earlier ideas very closely. Their arguments run as follows; centralisation of authority resulted in the drying up of slave supplies.⁵⁴ The fragmentation of the great landed estates acted against slavery because when land was distributed in this way, "...it is cultivated by slaves, which is a very unprofitable method of cultivation."⁵⁵ The reason for this was that slaves made very poor labourers because they were provided with no incentive to work hard.⁵⁶ Yet, if the land were apportioned out to them as free tenants they would be instilled with

⁵¹ See also H.E. Hallam, *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol. ii (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 90, S. Harvey, "The Extent and Profitability of Demesne Agriculture in the Late Eleventh-Century" in T.H. Aston et al. (eds.), *Social Relations and Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 45–73, 61 and J. Henning "Slavery or Freedom? The Causes of Early Medieval Europe's Economic Advancement", *Early Medieval Europe*, 2003, 12 (3), pp. 269–277, 272–277.

⁵² Wyatt, "Significance", p. 334.

⁵³ A. Smith, *Lectures in Jurisprudence*, R. Meek et al. (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

⁵⁴ "After regular government has been established, inhabitants of a country are restrained from plundering one another." Millar, *Origin*, p. 252.

⁵⁵ "One great hindrance to the progress of agriculture is the throwing of great tracts of land into the hands of single persons" Smith, *Jurisprudence*, p. 523.

⁵⁶ "A slave, who receives no wages in return for his labour, can never be expected to exert much vigour or activity in the exercise of any employment." Millar, *Origin*, p. 250.

a more productive work ethic and not only produce a greater surplus but also pay rent to their landlord.⁵⁷ Thus when

...the wonderful effects of industry and skill in cheapening commodities...become more and more conspicuous, it must be evident that little profit can be drawn from the labour of a slave.⁵⁸

Bloch had, therefore, reiterated all the central points of Smith and Millar's arguments which begs the question, why had these eighteenth-century ideas remained so influential? We must remember that Smith and Millar were scholars writing with their own political and social agenda. They were seeking to encourage trade, utility and abolitionism in an era when the aristocratic landlords and the slave trade had extremely powerful vested interests. Yet in Bloch's day, and for the later historians who follow his argument, aristocratic power was spent force and the New World slave trade long dead. Their desire to explain away slavery with such economic rationales therefore had much more to do with the prevalent and conflicting ideologies of their own era.⁵⁹

Marxist and anti-Marxist debates which attempt to explain the demise of medieval and ancient slavery have, in more recent times, continued to dominate the study of the subject. One result of this has been the continuing focus on slavery as a means of economic production. Yet, this has frequently resulted in a rather un-nuanced perspective of a very complex medieval institution. Indeed, this perspective has maintained an unhelpfully narrow research focus that concentrates predominantly on the male agricultural labourer and his productive capabilities. Moreover, it has significantly favoured research directed towards explaining the disappearance of slavery rather than seeking to understand the profound social and cultural significance of the institution for the societies of Medieval Europe.⁶⁰ In actuality, Marx had surprisingly little

⁵⁷ Smith, *Jurisprudence*, p. 186.

⁵⁸ Millar, *Origin*, p. 251, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 334.

⁵⁹ Wyatt, "Significance", pp. 328–347.

⁶⁰ For examples see P. Dockès, *Medieval Slavery and Liberation*, A Goldhammer (trans.) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), C.J. Wickham, "The Other Transition: From the Ancient World to Feudalism", *P&P*, 103, May 1984, pp. 3–36, S. Harvey, "Extent and Profitability", pp. 45–73, A. Verhulst, "The Decline of Slavery and the Economic Expansion of the Early Middle Ages", *P&P*, 133, November 1991, pp. 195–203, P. Bonassie, "The Survival and Extinction of the Slave System in the Early Medieval West" in *From Slavery to Feudalism in South Western Europe*, J. Birrell (trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 1–59 G. Bois, *The Transformation of the Year One Thousand: The Village of Lournard from Antiquity to Feudalism* (Manchester:

to say about the institution of slavery, but his belief that the demise of the 'ancient mode of production', gave rise to the 'feudal mode of production', which in turn was a pre-requisite for the establishment of capitalism, has fuelled intense argument.⁶¹ This, together with Engels' view that modern wage labour was merely a disguised form of slavery, has resulted in a hostile reaction from many Western historians.⁶² They have continued to suggest that slavery declined 'organically' as a result of economic expediency and development in order to disprove Marxist interpretations.⁶³ As Moses Finley has noted regarding ancient slavery,

... there has been a desultory discussion of Marxist theory, none of it, on either side, particularly illuminating about either Marxism or slavery.⁶⁴

Similar debates have been raging over the demise of New World slavery. Eric Williams in his study *Capitalism and Slavery*, published in the 1940s, argued that at the time of abolition the British West-Indian slave economy was a decaying and inefficient mode of production related to archaic mercantile commerce which was giving way to free-trade.⁶⁵ William's argument remained largely unchallenged for several decades yet perceptions began to change in the late 1960s following the publication of D.B. Davis's *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* which highlighted the social rather than economic complexities of the institution of slavery.⁶⁶ During the 1970's Williams's argument was systematically refuted by Seymour Drescher who revealed that abolitionism actually came at a time of great economic prosperity for the plantation owners. He noted that the plantations were adopting the latest technology and the slave trade was far more 'laissez faire' than the majority of

Manchester University Press, 1992), R. Samson, "The End of Medieval Slavery" in *The Work of Work: Servitude, Slavery and Labor in Medieval England*, A.J. Frantzen and D. Moffat (eds.) (Glasgow: Cruithne Press, 1994), pp. 95–125, 96–97.

⁶¹ Marx, K. *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, J. Cohen (trans.) (London: Laurence and Wishart, 1964), for examples of this debate see above, see also Wyatt, "Significance", p. 334.

⁶² F. Engels, "The Origin of the Family", 1884, in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works* (London/Moscow: Laurence and Wishart, 1968), p. 581, Wyatt, "Significance", pp. 334–335.

⁶³ Samson, 'End', pp. 96–97.

⁶⁴ Finley, *Ancient Slavery*, p. 62.

⁶⁵ Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, originally written in 1944 (London: Deutsch, 1964), p. 210, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 335.

⁶⁶ D.B. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), Wyatt, "Significance", p. 335.

English commerce.⁶⁷ Scholars of early modern slavery, such as Cohen and Temperley have taken this argument a step further by arguing that slavery and capitalism are far from incompatible.⁶⁸ Indeed, as D.B. Davis has observed,

We can no longer assume that slave systems are intrinsically unprogressive and self destructive or that the abolition of New World slavery was bound to occur as a result of economic forces guided by self interest.⁶⁹

Davis feels that the demise of Early Modern slavery had more to do with a significant shift in attitudes and mentalities than with economics.⁷⁰

If an intrinsically economically driven slave system, such as New World slavery, did not directly founder for economic reasons then can we really expect such factors to have been significant in the destruction of this institution in the very different societies of medieval Europe? Societies which were dominated largely by the pre-industrial values of honour, prestige, largesse and gift exchange. Yet, medievalists continue to reiterate arguments for the demise of slavery through economic expediency.⁷¹ Adam Smith, writing in the mid-eighteenth century, lived in a world, which in many ways was considerably closer to that of the twelfth century than our own. Yet, he voiced his doubts regarding the effectiveness which Christian influence would have in restricting slaving activity asserting that "...we are not to imagine the temper of the Christian religion is necessarily contrary to slavery."⁷² It was

⁶⁷ S. Drescher, "Capitalism and Abolition: Values and Forces in Britain 1783–1814" in R. Anstey and P.E.H. Hair (eds.), *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade and Abolition* (Liverpool: Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1976), pp. 167–196. See also R. Anstey, "The Historical Debate on Abolition" in Anstey and Hair, *Liverpool*, pp. 157–165, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 335.

⁶⁸ G.A. Cohen, "Capitalism, Freedom and the Proletariat" in A. Ryan (ed.), *The Idea of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 9–27, 15. See also H. Temperley, "Capitalism, Slavery and Ideology", *P&P*, 75, 1977, pp. 94–118, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 335.

⁶⁹ Davis, "Slavery and 'Progress'", p. 356.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 352. See also D.B. Davis, *Problem*, pp. 291–330, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 335.

⁷¹ For example in his 1995 publication Pelteret argued that the Norman overlords of Essex encouraged the use of the heavy plough in order to increase arable land which would in turn increase revenues from free tenants and, therefore, reduce the expenses and "the management costs involved in supervising slaves" Pelteret, *Slavery*, p. 212, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 335.

⁷² Smith, *Jurisprudence*, p. 191. Smith's comment receives significant support in Glancy's recent study *Slavery in Early Christianity*, pp. 70–71.

his considered opinion that despite the beneficial economic effects of manumission which he had expounded that

...the love of domination and authority and the pleasure men take in having every (thing) done by their express orders, rather than to condescend to bargain and treat with those whom they look upon as inferiors and are inclined to use in a haughty way; this love of domination and tyrannizing, I say, will make it impossible for the slaves in a free country ever to recover their liberty.⁷³

This is an aspect of Smith's argument that few historians have focussed upon and yet it is highly significant. Smith clearly recognised the psychological and cultural significance of this human institution which perpetuated the personalised domination of one individual over another.⁷⁴

The importance of slavery as a social/cultural institution, rather than an economic mode of production, has been highlighted by the historical sociologist Orlando Patterson in his extensive comparative study *Slavery and Social Death*, published in the early 1980's. Patterson has compared and contrasted slaving societies from across the globe and from varying periods in history. He recognises that slavery is an extremely contextual phenomenon constructed by different societies in different ways. Nevertheless, he contends that there are certain characteristics of the institution which remain common in many societies. Notably, that slavery often defines social order and helps to perpetuate the position of the elite.⁷⁵ Patterson argues that although the slave may not always be treated as a mere object he or she is nevertheless regarded as socially dead.⁷⁶ Alienated from their culture and kin group the slave is dependent upon his master and becomes a living surrogate of the master's honour and ego.⁷⁷ In short, slavery was about naked power whether it existed on the lord's great demesnes or in the humble peasant's cottage. Profitability was often not even an issue: "...most slaves in pre-capitalist societies were not enslaved to be made into workers; they may even have been a burden on their masters."⁷⁸ Patterson's ideas have been used with some success by Ruth Mazo Karras in her

⁷³ Smith, *Jurisprudence*, p. 186.

⁷⁴ Wyatt, "Significance", p. 336.

⁷⁵ Patterson, *Social Death*, p. 1, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 336.

⁷⁶ Patterson, *Social Death*, p. 5, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 336.

⁷⁷ Patterson, *Social Death*, p. 4, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 336.

⁷⁸ Patterson, *Social Death*, p. 99.

book *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia*. Karras argues that "...distinctions between status were often governed by intangible cultural factors and not economic ones" and that in order to understand the demise of medieval slavery we need to understand why "...those who created the cultural categories stopped classifying people as unfree."⁷⁹ Yet, the majority of medieval historians have been reluctant to regard slavery from this perspective and the 'traditional' economic arguments of Smith and Bloch continue to predominate.⁸⁰

Entering into the twenty-first century, and debates surrounding slavery in the early medieval West have been somewhat reinvigorated by the work of the Harvard University professor Michael McCormick. In his fascinating article "New Light on the 'Dark Ages': How the Slave Trade Fuelled the Carolingian economy" (published in 2002) McCormick ensures that the discourse on slavery in medieval Europe remains firmly located within the realm of the economic historian.⁸¹ His paper seeks to challenge the ideas of the hugely influential Belgian scholar Henri Pirenne, writing during the 1920's. Pirenne had argued that between the late seventh and the ninth centuries long distance Western European trade links to the Mediterranean and beyond had been severed by the rising power and military influence of the Islamic world. Consequently, for Pirenne, the early Middle Ages were an era of commercial stagnation and isolation for Western Europe.⁸² McCormick sets out to disprove this thesis by demonstrating that trade routes between the medieval West and the Middle East were actually very vibrant during this period. He cites evidence for a significant influx of Middle Eastern imports such as silk, spices and drugs into North Western Europe via the Adriatic.⁸³ He notes that these goods were being imported by traders from the medieval West, particularly the

⁷⁹ R.M. Karras, *Slavery and Society in Medieval Scandinavia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 38, 107–108. It should be noted that, in his systematic and highly empirical work *Trelldommen Norsk Slaveri i middelalderen*, Tore Iversen has suggested that Karras's 'conceptual category' approach has a limited applicability within the Norwegian context, *Trelldommen Norsk Slaveri i middelalderen* (Bergen: Historisk institutt Universitetet i Bergen, 1997), p. 285.

⁸⁰ Wyatt, "Significance", pp. 334–336.

⁸¹ M. McCormick, "New Light on the 'Dark Ages': How the Slave Trade Fuelled the Carolingian economy", *P&P*, 177, 2002, 17–54, this paper presented some of the key findings of McCormick's monograph *The Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, AD 300–900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁸² McCormick, "New Light", pp. 18–20.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 38–39.

Venetians. This inevitably leads him to question "...what, c. 800 was Europe producing in abundance, of great value to the Arab economy?" The answer is one that McCormick rather dramatically states he "long hesitated to draw": people. In McCormick's words,

It is no coincidence that the very first Venetian merchants in the historical record were in the business of exporting enslaved European Christians to Africa around 750, just as the caliphate was emerging from the last bubonic plague of the Early Middle Ages... Europe was producing lots of Europeans, and the Islamic world's demand for slaves was voracious.⁸⁴

McCormick goes on to suggest that those icons of early medieval Christian culture, the Carolingian Franks, were in fact the major players in this booming export business. Indeed, in spite of complaints from certain Carolingian Churchmen, the slave trade continued to receive royal sanction and protection from figures like Charlemagne and his son, Louis the Pious.⁸⁵ Prohibitions on the sale of Carolingian Christian subjects were therefore, by and large, ignored or circumvented.⁸⁶ McCormick concludes that the "...sale of young Europeans on the shores of Africa, in the markets of Spain and in the Middle East, helped to fuel the nascent economy of Europe."⁸⁷

One of the strengths of McCormick's thesis is that it highlights how economic dynamism and the growth of a market economy are far from incompatible with the institution of slavery and the slave trade. Yet, rather surprisingly, he undertakes no meaningful critique of the long-standing and highly influential argument that slavery in medieval Europe was an economic anachronism, associated with agricultural and commercial stagnation. Indeed, it is interesting that, despite inadvertently undermining Bloch's influential ideas about the dwindling nature of slave supplies in Christendom, McCormick makes no mention of Bloch's work within his paper. Nevertheless, McCormick's approach follows Bloch's in many respects; like Bloch he embraces economic rationalism and confidence in the progressive growth of the market economy in the region. Moreover, his work is laden with the highly anachronistic terminology of the modern economist and this does not always sit comfortably, or indeed convincingly, with the gift-giving

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 43.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 43–50.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 47–48.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 53.

honorific cultures of early medieval Europe. He frames his discussion in terms of “products” and “transactions”, “export-import balances”, “European deficit” and of “Europe running a positive balance of trade with the Muslim world.”⁸⁸

Furthermore, despite his clear acknowledgement that Christians often had few problems with enslaving other Christians, his paper nonetheless tends to externalise the institution of slavery from Western Europe. McCormick certainly cites considerable and convincing evidence for widespread slave raiding and trading, both small-scale and large-scale, within the region. Yet, one is still left with an overall impression that this is deemed somehow more palatable because these slaves were being exported to a foreign, more exotic, culture that was intrinsically slave-holding by nature. Indeed, there is little discussion of the significance of evidence for slaves being held within Western Europe or of slaves being imported and traded within Christendom.

McCormick’s work has inevitably provoked a reaction which, once again, reveals the emotive and politically charged nature of the debates that surround medieval slavery. His economically based approach has resulted in the reiteration of a very familiar defensive position. The German archaeologist Joachim Henning recently criticised McCormick’s thesis in a short review paper entitled “Slavery or Freedom? The causes of early medieval Europe’s economic advancement” published in 2003.⁸⁹ In particular, Henning takes exception to McCormick’s statement that “Europeans hunted and captured (slaves) across the continent” which he criticises as an excessively broad characterization.⁹⁰ Conversely, Henning argues that raids by Byzantine and Arab forces upon the Mediterranean coastline were probably the key source of slave supplies for the Islamic world.⁹¹ His clear desire to externalise slave raiding practices outside Western Europe is further complemented by his wish to see the seeds of economic growth sprouting from indigenous roots. Indeed, he feels that the economic vibrancy of the West did not stem from the sale of Europeans abroad but rather blossomed from the internal innovation and vibrancy of the medieval West in relation to agricultural production.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 22, 40.

⁸⁹ J. Henning, “Slavery or Freedom?”, pp. 269–277.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 272, McCormick quote from *Origins of the European Economy*, p. 733.

⁹¹ Henning, “Slavery or Freedom?”, pp. 271–272.

The Roman villa, based on permanent labour forces attached to this unit (slaves)... did not survive in post-Roman central Europe... The key factors for the new system were a technological base... and the increasing number of relatively autonomous and self-managing peasants organized mainly in villages, a growing interest of these food producers in their own daily work, and finally a higher degree of freedom in the rural world.⁹²

Henning's argument in this respect would certainly have met with the approval of both Adam Smith and Marc Bloch.

Approaching Slavery: A Case Study

Given the enduring power and influence of economic arguments for the disappearance of medieval slavery, I think that it is essential, before we proceed, to deconstruct such approaches and suggest some alternative avenues for enquiry. Using Anglo-Saxon England as a case study, then, let us now take a brief look at the contemporary medieval evidence in relation to the arguments for the economic demise of slavery there. First, let us examine the hypothesis that slave supplies were dwindling in late Anglo-Saxon England. This argument follows two main threads. Firstly, that the unification of England and the increasingly centralised nature of its government reduced the levels of 'tribal' warfare thus limiting the opportunity to take slaves. Many medievalists have followed this line of argument from the eighteenth century scholar Sharon Turner to the much more recent study by David Pelteret.⁹³ The underlying assumption here is that late Anglo-Saxon England was a kind of Tolkienesque 'Shire' populated by a peaceful and law abiding community and devoid of bandit groups or small-scale skirmishes between the armies of powerful men. The nineteenth century historian J.R. Green provides a representative example in his *A Short History of the English People* stating; "Peace and order had greatly modified the older order which had followed the English conquest."⁹⁴ Yet, the contemporary sources paint a

⁹² Ibid., pp. 274, 276. He adds that "no other region except western and central Europe... shows such a high degree of agricultural technological innovation and of experimentation with sophisticated new forms of organization of an even more free peasantry."

⁹³ See S. Turner, *The History of the Anglo-Saxons* (London: T. Cadell, Jun. and W. Davies, 1801), pp. 220–225. J.R. Green, *A Short History of the English People* (London: Dent, 1964), p. 53. Freeman *Norman Conquest*, vol. i, p. 33. Loyn *Free Anglo-Saxon*, p. 12. Bloch, *Slavery and Serfdom*, p. 25. Pelteret, *Slavery*, p. 77.

⁹⁴ Green, *Short History*, p. 53.

slightly less palatable picture of Anglo-Saxon society. Indeed, it seems that even during the late Anglo-Saxon era powerful magnates dirtied their hands with slave raiding. For example, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* tells us that following his capture of Alfred the Aetheling in 1036 Earl Godwine sold some of his companions “for money” (“*sume hi man wið feo sealed*”).⁹⁵ A few decades later a large band of Northumbrians are said to have “...captured many hundreds of people and took them north with them”.⁹⁶ Such high profile raids have left their mark in the historical record, yet how many small-scale raids during which individuals were clandestinely abducted have gone unrecorded? It appears that even those unfortunates who already laboured under the yoke of slavery were not safe from abduction. This is made evident by the repeated Anglo-Saxon law codes that inflict penalties for the stealing of slaves.⁹⁷ Moreover, the moral wrath expounded by the ecclesiastical authorities

⁹⁵ It might be argued that these companions were simply being ransomed, however, the context of the entry states that others from the group were killed, fettered, blinded and cruelly destroyed strongly suggesting that these individuals met with the shameful and dishonourable fate of enslavement. This is certainly how Pelteret has chosen to interpret the account, moreover, the Chronicler clearly chose to use the Old English term *sealde* [sold] rather than *lysan* [ransom]. Generally, during the course of this book, where the sources do not explicitly express that enslavement has taken place, related terms concerning capture and captivity will be interpreted as enslavement only when the contextual information accompanying that capture strongly suggests that this was so, as in this case. For example, if a source states that hundreds were taken captive *en masse* then enslavement rather than hostage taking appears the most likely interpretation. Nevertheless, even in situations in which battle-taken aristocratic opponents were taken hostage, rather than enslaved, the associated dishonour which they suffered might have been significant, at least prior to the adoption of chivalric norms of behaviour in warfare during the late eleventh century. See *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, a Collaborative Edition MS C*, vol. v, K. O’Keefe (ed.) (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), p. 106, translation from *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, M.J. Swanton (ed. and trans.) (London: J.M. Dent, 1996), p. 158 and Pelteret, *Slavery*, p. 72. In a similar manner, Godwine’s first wife is said to have made a fortune from dealing in slaves, see Willam of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum, The History of the English Kings*, Mynors, R.A.B. et al. (eds. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), vol. ii, pp. 362–363.

⁹⁶ ‘...7 fela hund manna hi naman 7 leddan norð mid heom.’ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, a Collaborative Edition MS D*, vol. vi, G.P. Cubbin (ed.) (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996), p. 78, translation from Swanton, *ASC*, p. 193.

⁹⁷ Aethelbert 89, Hlothhere and Eadric 5, Ine 53, Aethelstan 6.3 in *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen von F. Liebermann; hrsg. im Auftrage der Savigny-Stiftung*, F. Liebermann (ed) (Halle: Niemeyer, 1903–1916), pp. 8, 9, 112, 176–177. Similar codes are extant in the medieval Welsh law tracts, see *The Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales*, vol. ii, A. Owen (ed. and trans.) (London: Record Commission, 1841), pp. 60–61, 82–83, 604–605. The late tenth-century *Life of St. Swithun* relates that a female slave who was stolen from her Northumbrian master eventually ended up in Winchester. See *Miracula II* 23–28 in *Acta Sanctorum. Iulii... Tomus I*, C. Ianning et al. (eds.) (Paris and Roma, 1867), p. 297. Reference taken from Pelteret, *Slavery*, p. 58. Glancy has similarly noted that the theft

against the sale of English souls to foreign heathens during the eleventh century suggests that slave supplies were far from drying up.⁹⁸ This is evident from the repeatedly reissued Anglo-Saxon law codes against this "...all too prevalent practice."⁹⁹

Even if we accept that a more disciplined and centralised government restricted slave-raiding practices in Anglo-Saxon society, it does not necessarily follow that slave numbers were dwindling. In the early medieval period, wars between the fragmented Anglo-Saxon kingdoms undoubtedly facilitated slave taking. However, the parochial and decentralised nature of these kingdoms would have made it more difficult to prevent slaves from escaping.¹⁰⁰ By contrast, the bureaucratic complexity and more centralised nature of the later Anglo-Saxon kingdom may have made it more efficient in securing slaves and maintaining control over them. The Anglo-Saxon laws frequently re-enacted measures to prevent slave runaways.¹⁰¹ In addition, the sources suggest that the English slave population was self-sustaining because in Anglo-Saxon society slavery was a hereditary condition.¹⁰² Indeed, medieval historians have acknowledged that many Anglo-Saxon slaves would have had families.¹⁰³ This is clearly evident from a number of the Anglo-Saxon wills. For example in the will of Wynflæd, dating to around 950, the

of slaves was considered a serious problem in the late Roman state, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, pp. 79–80.

⁹⁸ *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, D. Whitelock (ed.) (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1976), pp. 57–58, *GRA*, pp. 458–459.

⁹⁹ '...we beodað þæt man Cristene men ealles to swiðe of eardan ne sylle ne on hæðendome huru nr bringe...', *Cnut 3 II, Die Gesetze*, p. 310. Translation in *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, Robertson, A. J. (ed. and trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925) p. 177.

¹⁰⁰ Samson, "End", p. 100, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 340.

¹⁰¹ Ine 24, Aethelstan 6.3 *Die Gesetze*, pp. 100, 176–177. The early medieval Irish laws also note that a runaway slave could not be afforded protection of any kind, see *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, D.A. Binchy (ed.) (Dublin: Institiúid Ard-Léinn Bhaile Átha Cliath, 1978), 47.1, see also F. Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1988), p. 95. Similar measures were enacted by the twelfth century Scottish monarch David I (1081–1153), see above, see also Wyatt, "Significance", pp. 340–341.

¹⁰² Certain historians, probably with New World slavery in mind, have argued that the medieval slave population would have been unable to sustain itself see Sansom, "End", p. 100. See Pelteret on hereditary nature of Anglo Saxon slavery, *Slavery*, pp. 103–105, 114–115. The hereditary nature of the condition is also explicit in the *ASW*, pp. 13–15. For the hereditary nature of slavery within the other societies of medieval Britain see chapter 2. For hereditary slavery and the internal recruitment of slaves in Norway see Iversen, *Trelldommen*, pp. 110–112, 285–286.

¹⁰³ Moore, "Domesday Slavery", p. 219. Pelteret, *Slavery*, pp. 103–105.

female testator bequeathed many of her slaves to her relatives. These included, among others,

Eadstan's son and Aeffa's son...Burga's daughter; Herestan and his wife and Ecghelm and his wife and their child, Cynestan and Wynsige and Brihtric's son and Eadwyn and Bunele's son and Aelfhere's daughter.¹⁰⁴

The wills also note the prolific nature of *witepeowas* or penal slaves suggesting that non-hereditary penal slavery would have supplemented existing supplies of slave labour.¹⁰⁵ Finally, the sources clearly relate that destitution and starvation might prompt individuals to sell themselves or their offspring into slavery thus further increasing the pool of slaves.¹⁰⁶ A late tenth-century manumission document in the Durham *Liber Vitae* records that a slave owner named Geatflæd freed a certain number of slaves "...whose persons she took in exchange for food in the evil days (i.e. of famine)."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ 'Estances sunu 7 Aeffan sunu...Burgan dohtor 7 Herestan 7 his wif 7 ecelm 7 his wif 7 hiora cild 7 Cynestan 7 Wynsige 7 Byrhtices sunu 7 Edewynne 7 Buneles sunu 7 Aelfferer dohtor...' *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, pp. 13–15. *The Will of Aethelgifu; A Tenth Century Anglo-Saxon Manuscript* provides further examples, D. Whitelock (ed.) (Oxford: the Roxburghe Club, 1968).

¹⁰⁵ *ASW*; Wynflæd (950?) pp. 12–13, Ælfeah (968 x 971) pp. 23–25, Archbishop Ælfric (1003 x 1004) pp. 53–55. The Irish law codes suggest that slavery was also a punishment for serious crimes in early medieval Ireland, see Kelly, *Guide*, pp. 95–98. Given the similarities in language and culture it seems probable that similar punishments existed in Scottish society. Adomnán, abbot of Iona (679–704) related an anecdote about a repentant Irish slave named Librán who was enslaved after committing murder; see *Adomnán of Iona, Life of St. Columba*, R. Sharpe (ed. and trans.) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), lib. ii, cap. 39, pp. 188–190. Furthermore, the author of the *Vita Sancti Cadoci* (which dates to around 1100) relates that the Welsh saint, Cadog, helped to reveal the identity of an ox thief who was subsequently punished by being delivered into perpetual slavery at the saint's monastery. See *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogiae*, A.W. Wade-Evans (ed. and trans.) (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1944), cap. 33, pp. 94–97.

¹⁰⁶ Glancy notes that such practices were evident in the late Roman era. She has also argued that the raising of foundling slaves, unwanted children who had been exposed at an early age on refuse heaps, in conjunction with the hereditary nature of slave status were, by far, the most significant methods of slave recruitment in the late Roman era, far outnumbering those slaves captured in warfare, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, pp. 74–77, 80–85.

¹⁰⁷ '... 7 ealle þa men þe heo nam heora heafod for hyra mete on þam ylflum dagum.' *Diplomatarium Anglicum Aevi Saxonici*, B. Thorpe (ed. and trans.) (London, 1865), p. 621, translation from *English Historical Documents 500–1042*, 150, D. Whitelock (ed. and trans.) (London: Eyre Methuen, 1979), pp. 563–564. Similarly, the 1170 Council of Armagh is said to have noted that the Anglo-Saxons "would sell their own sons and relations into Ireland rather than endure any want or hunger." ("... et priusquam inopiam ullam aut inediā sustinerent, filios proprios et cognatos in Hiberniam vendere consueverant."), *Expugnatio Hibernica, Giraldus Cambrensis*, Scott, A.B. and Martin, F.X. (eds. and trans.) (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1978) pp. 69–71. The *Annals of Ulster* also relate that in 965 there was a

Within the English national historiography there has been a powerful and influential preconception that England, once unified, became a peaceful and law abiding land that discarded the bad habits of its past. Yet there is little evidence within the sources to support the supposition that unification and centralisation dramatically limited slave-raiding activities, or indeed the pool of slaves, in Anglo-Saxon England.¹⁰⁸ Those historians who have acknowledged that this is the case have frequently felt obliged to voice their disapproval and surprise. For example, Henry Loyn argued that in the context of the progressive development of Western European civilisation, Anglo-Saxon England was "...more advanced in some respects, notably in its achievement of political unity, more backward in others such as its late adherence to slavery."¹⁰⁹

The second thread of the argument concerning the dwindling nature of medieval slave supplies is founded upon the notion that the spread of Christianity reduced the numbers of victims who could be legitimately enslaved. This was because the Church expressly forbade the sale of fellow Christians.¹¹⁰ Yet, Marc Bloch recognised that there were significant problems in applying this line of argument, especially to the societies of Britain. In a very brief digression into the British context he was obliged to modify his hypothesis and acknowledge that, within the British communities, Christians had continued to enslave other Christians. The reason for this, he argued, was the "...continual guerrilla war raged there between Saxons and Celts, who were Christians of course, but whom adversaries willingly considered foreign to Roman orthodoxy."¹¹¹ A great deal has been made of this ethnic division between Celt and Saxon and it was certainly true that Britain's various ethnic groups indulged in regular slave raids upon

"great and intolerable famine in Ireland, so that the father was want to sell his son and daughter for food." (*"Gorta mór dí[f]fúlochta i nErinn co renadh int athair a mc. 7 a ingin ar bradh."*), *Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)*, S. Mac Airt and G. Mac Niocaill (eds. and trans.) (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1983), pp. 404–405.

¹⁰⁸ If one accepts McCormick's argument then the same might be suggested for Carolingian France, McCormick, "Dark Ages", pp. 17–54, see also Wyatt, "Significance", p. 340.

¹⁰⁹ Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 79.

¹¹⁰ Green, *Short History*, p. 53. Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 87. Bloch, *Slavery and Serfdom*, p. 25, Bonassie, *From Slavery to Feudalism*, pp. 58–59.

¹¹¹ Bloch, *Slavery and Serfdom*, p. 25.

each other.¹¹² This is perhaps unsurprising, given that it is often much easier to subjugate an individual of foreign ethnicity and language.¹¹³ Yet, in spite of this, indigenous or insular slave raiding also remained a popular activity amongst the warriors of these societies. It appears that Irishman continued to enslave Irishman, Welshman continued to enslave Welshman, Anglo-Saxons continued to enslave other Anglo-Saxons and all were Christians. Holm has remarked that the Dublin slave market was vibrant throughout the eleventh century and into the twelfth. Just like McCormick's Venetian slave traders in the Adriatic, these Irish-Sea merchants do not appear to have been particularly fussy about either the religion or ethnicity of their merchandise.¹¹⁴ Scottish raiders seem to have had few qualms about enslaving fellow Christians from the province of Northumbria during the first few decades of the twelfth century.¹¹⁵ The twelfth-century king of Gwynedd Gruffudd ap Cynan and his sons appear to have been just as interested in enslaving fellow Welshmen as they were in enslaving Englishmen or Normans.¹¹⁶ It has already been argued that Anglo-Saxons continued to hold, trade and raid slaves of their own ethnic group and religion during the eleventh century. Similarly, Glancy has revealed that the Christianised populations of the late-Roman era had few problems with holding other Christians as their slaves.¹¹⁷ Comparisons might also be drawn with the Arab world. Murray Gordon has noted that, although Islam strictly prohibited the enslavement of Muslims by fellow Muslims this prohibition was frequently contravened or even completely ignored.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Hallam felt that the high proportion of slaves reported by Domesday in the western counties was due, in part, to wars with "pre-Saxon peoples" see Hallam, *Agrarian History*, p. 69. For other examples see Bromberg, "Wales Slave Trade" p. 263. Also W. Davies, "On Servile Status in the Early Middle-Ages" in M.L. Bush (ed.), *Serfdom and Slavery; Studies in Legal Bondage* (London/New York: Longman, 1996), pp. 225–247, 239–244 and Pelteret, *Slavery*, pp. 73, 77.

¹¹³ D. Wyatt, "Slavery and Cultural Antipathy", Unpublished MA dissertation, 1999, pp. 27–28, Wyatt, "Significance", pp. 338–339.

¹¹⁴ By the late eleventh century this Hiberno-Norse port was firmly under Irish control and was trading in Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, Welsh, Scottish and Irish Christians, see Holm, "Slave Trade", pp. 317–344, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 339.

¹¹⁵ For examples, see *Historia Regum, Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, 2 vols., T. Arnold (ed.) (London: Rolls Series, 1882–1885), vol. ii, pp. 190–192, 290. See also chapter 5.

¹¹⁶ Holm, "Slave Trade", p. 341. Also D. Wyatt, "Gruffudd ap Cynan and the Hiberno-Norse World", *WHR*, vol. 19, no. 4, 2000, pp. 595–617, p. 617 and Wyatt, "Significance", p. 339.

¹¹⁷ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, pp. 8–37, 70–71.

¹¹⁸ M. Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World* (New York: New Amsterdam Books, 1987), pp. 19–20, 29–31, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 339.

So, religious ethics concerning the enslavement of fellow Christians do not appear to have restricted slaving activities within the populations of medieval Britain. Indeed, these activities continued to occur on a wide scale at least until the twelfth century and they were not merely restricted to the enslavement of individuals from other ethnic groups within the British Isles.

A further argument has been employed to suggest that slave numbers were diminishing through ecclesiastical influence; that medieval Churchmen actively encouraged slave owners to free all of their slaves.¹¹⁹ Dorothy Whitelock typified such sentiments when she argued that “The redemption of captives and the manumitting of slaves were Christian acts of mercy much encouraged by the Church.”¹²⁰ Yet, such arguments have been heavily influenced by modern sentiments concerning the nature of abolitionism. The medieval Church did encourage the manumission of slaves; however, this should in no way be regarded as movement towards the abolition of the institution of slavery. The process of manumission has long been recognised as an integral, often essential, element of slave-holding systems, rather than a means to abolish those systems.¹²¹ Furthermore, there is no evidence that the medieval Church campaigned for the total abolition of slavery or even that ecclesiastics viewed the institution of slavery as immoral.¹²² As has already been noted the main concern of the Church was to prevent any reduction in the Lord’s flock that might be inflicted by the sale of Christian souls into pagan hands.¹²³ Within Christendom, the institution of slavery was accepted by the Church, which made every effort to ensure the master’s continuing domination, indeed the Church was

¹¹⁹ Kemble, *Saxons*, pp. 211–213, Whitelock, *Beginnings*, p. 112, Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 35, Bonassie, *Slavery and Feudalism*, pp. 32, 58–9.

¹²⁰ Whitelock, *Beginnings*, p. 112. Pelteret argues that the most common reason given for the freeing of slaves was piety. The phrase *pro anima sua* (‘for the sake of his soul’) frequently appears in manumission documents, see Pelteret *Slavery*, p. 150. Similarly *The Will of Wýnflæd* states that any penally enslaved men should be freed “for her soul’s sake” (*for hyre saulle*) see, ASW, pp. 12–13.

¹²¹ Patterson, *Social Death*, pp. 209–239, Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 94.

¹²² For a full discussion of this point see chapter 4.

¹²³ At the beginning of the eleventh century Wulfstan II, Archbishop of York, had a hand in the legislation of Cnut which prohibited the sale of men abroad “and especially conveying them into heathen lands” (*“ne sylle ne on hæðendóme huru ne bringe”*). That such legislation was re-enacted at the beginning of the twelfth century indicates the difficulties involved in banning the slave trade. *Cnut II*, 3, *Die Gesetze*, p. 310, see also Pelteret, *Slavery*, p. 91, see also Samson, “End”, p. 109. Glancy highlights the longstanding nature of such concerns in Christian communities, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, pp. 96–99.

a major slave owning institution. Despite his apparently vigorous campaign to outlaw the slave trade in Bristol, Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester continued to maintain around 472 slaves on his monastic demesne in the West Midlands.¹²⁴ Moreover, laymen were encouraged to manumit their slaves for the same reason that they were encouraged to reject all of their other earthly possessions. It was one of several methods by which an individual might express their rejection of temporal wealth and their devotion to apostolic poverty. In this respect, then, the Church regarded slaves as simply another manifestation of temporal wealth.¹²⁵ Many slaves who were manumitted for the piety of their owners were often subsequently donated to ecclesiastical institutions as gifts and became the property of the Church.¹²⁶ Such ecclesiastically owned slaves were very rarely manumitted because their emancipation would have constituted an alienation of Church property and this was strictly prohibited.¹²⁷

A number of historians have argued that the increasing influence of the Christian doctrine resulted in progressively high levels of manumission in England during the tenth and eleventh centuries. Vinogradoff felt that there had been a “mighty current of emancipation” during the eleventh century.¹²⁸ Similarly, Loyn has argued that “The manumissions of the late Anglo-Saxon period speak of constant activity, notably among ecclesiastics, to redeem the servile.”¹²⁹ Whitelock felt that lords were increasingly inclined towards emancipating their slaves because, “people were not altogether comfortable owning slaves of their own race.”¹³⁰ The majority of the evidence for this ‘wave of manumission’

¹²⁴ See *Domesday Book 16, Worcestershire*, F. Thorn and C. Thorn (eds.) (Chichester: Phillimore, 1982), folios; 172c, 172d, 173a, 173b, 173c, 173d, 174a. See also H.B. Clarke, “Domesday Slavery (Adjusted for Slaves)”, *Midland History*, 1.4, 1972, pp. 37–46. For Alcuin, see Samson, “End”, p. 110. For slave holding in the Church, see Bloch, *Slavery and Serfdom*, p. 13.

¹²⁵ Samson, “End”, p. 109 Glancy suggests that similar motivations concerning the rejection of temporal wealth stimulated Christian manumissions in the late Roman era, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 96.

¹²⁶ Bloch, *Slavery and Serfdom*, pp. 16–17.

¹²⁷ Samson, “End”, pp. 110–111.

¹²⁸ Vindograft, *English Society*, p. 468.

¹²⁹ Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 350. Historians have even argued that this process was further encouraged by the economic expediency of manumission. Yet, this appears to be unlikely given that manumissions were intended as acts of piety that would result in a material loss not financial gain. See H.C. Darby, *Domesday England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 73 and Samson, “End”, pp. 104–105.

¹³⁰ Whitelock, *Beginnings*, p. 112. However, such manumissions were only to occur upon the death of the master, evidently masters were quite happy to hold slaves of their own race whilst they remained alive enough to appreciate their services.

in England appears to come from the Anglo-Saxon wills.¹³¹ Pelteret employs a sample of nine wills from the tenth century and nineteen wills from the eleventh century to suggest that there was “a definite increase in the manumission of slaves in East Anglia in the eleventh century.” (See Appendix 1)¹³² He argues that in the tenth-century wills only a proportion of the testator’s slaves were to be manumitted upon their owner’s death. Paradoxically, he feels that “all slaves were freed in virtually every eleventh-century East Anglian will.”¹³³ Yet, this would appear to be a very restricted sample from which to extrapolate any significant conclusions. Two of the eight eleventh-century testators (Ketel and Edwin) lost all of their possessions following the Conquest making it unlikely that these manumissions had ever been carried through. Furthermore, only half of the eleventh-century wills state specifically that all the testator’s slaves were to be freed. An inspection of the *Domesday* records suggest that, in spite of the stated intention of mass manumission, three quarters of the identifiable estates included in the remaining six wills were still holding slaves in 1066 and just over fifty percent of these estates still had slaves in 1086 (see Appendix 2). Evidence from the wills for increasing manumission levels in pre-Conquest Anglo-Saxon England must therefore be called into question. Even the underestimated figures extant in the *Domesday* survey suggest that slaves still formed a substantial thirty percent of the population of England in 1066.¹³⁴ By 1086, after twenty years of Norman rule and the associated dramatic social upheavals, the slave population, although reduced, was apparently still a very significant ten percent. Yet,

¹³¹ Whitelock, *Beginnings*, p. 112, Loyn, *Free Anglo-Saxon*, p. 7, Pelteret, *Slavery*, pp. 129–130.

¹³² Pelteret, *Slavery*, p. 129.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 129–130.

¹³⁴ Pelteret suggests that the slave population in Essex had declined from 38% of the total population in 1066 to 13% in 1086 see *Slavery*, pp. 204–205. This estimate is supported by Welldon-Finn who felt that the slave population of Essex had fallen by 30% during this period, see *Domesday Book A Guide* (London/Chichester: Phillimore, 1973), p. 35. Given the regional variations in the slave population it is impossible to extrapolate accurately from these figures. Counties such as Gloucestershire and Shropshire still appear to have had slave populations in the region of 20% in 1086. Counties such as Norfolk and Suffolk, on the other hand, had slave populations of less than 5% (see Moore, “Domesday Slavery”, p. 193). Yet, it is likely that the Domesday figures significantly underestimate the slave population in 1086. Therefore, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest that at least 30% of the population of England had been slaves in 1066. It is likely that the decline in this population over the following twenty years was due more to slaves escaping during the upheavals of the Conquest than to the process of manumission.

despite the weight of this evidence medieval historians have continued to concentrate their efforts on revealing the progressively civilised and economically expedient nature of Anglo-Saxon society.

The hypothesis that slaves make inherently poor workers is of central importance to the influential and pervasive argument that medieval slavery disappeared as a result of developing of market forces. Yet, besides the immediate threat of physical violence, the medieval slave may have been provided with many incentives to perform their duties well. Their workload could be reduced, they could be allowed to remain within their family group, they could be rewarded materially or their status could be improved and, ultimately, they could be given their freedom. For the dependent peasant or serf; however, the only real reward was the profit to be derived from surplus produce.¹³⁵ The Anglo-Saxon wills provide some indication of the more subtle forms that subjection might take in early medieval England. They appear to reveal that close personal relationships, and perhaps emotive bonds, might exist between a master/mistress and their slaves. The *Will of Wynflæd* (c. 950) suggests that the testator knew many of her slaves by their Christian names as well as by their occupations. An individual named Wulfwaru appears to have been Wynflæd's personal slave woman and must have performed her duties with competence and discretion because her mistress desired that she "be freed and she is to serve whom she pleases."¹³⁶ Many slave families were to be bequeathed intact to Wynflæd's relatives, while others who were presumably less favoured were to be separated.¹³⁷ In the tenth-century will of Æthelgifu some of the testator's slaves were even manumitted and then bequeathed slaves of their own. This was presumably the ultimate affirmation of their newly acquired free status.¹³⁸ Documents such as this are highly significant because they reveal the extremely complex nature of the master-slave relationship. Indeed, as Temperley has argued with regard to New World slavery: "Just because rewards are limited doesn't mean that men won't compete desperately for them."¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Samson, "End", p. 102.

¹³⁶ '...7 freoge man Wulfware folgyge þam þe hyre leof[st sy...]', *ASW*, p. 11.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹³⁸ "Edwin (when free) is to have Aelfs wyth and her children and the miller's wife and her children." ("...7 aelfs wyðe hæbbe eadwine freo 7 hire cild 7 þæs mylneres wif.") *Wo.E.*, lines 15–19, see for other examples lines; 26–27, 50–51, 53–54.

¹³⁹ Temperley, "Capitalism, Slavery and Ideology", p. 108. D.B. Davis has noted of the study of New World slavery that "...historians have not yet found a convincing

The focus of analysis upon Anglo-Saxon slavery as a purely economic institution has also resulted in historians being particularly over-reliant on evidence from *The Domesday Book*. Yet, the statistical nature of the information included within *Domesday* has, in some instances, resulted in particularly anachronistic interpretations of slavery in the late Anglo-Saxon context. The majority of historians have generally assumed that the typical Anglo-Saxon slave would have been a male labourer employed in heavy agricultural tasks such as ploughing.¹⁴⁰ This assumption, which clearly mirrors modern perceptions of the type of work undertaken by slaves, is derived, almost entirely, from the evidence of the *Domesday* commissioners. Yet, these medieval bureaucrats were predominantly interested in those individuals who contributed economically towards the financial well being of the estates being assessed.¹⁴¹ The commissioners would, therefore, have disregarded the majority of domestic slaves including male house slaves, child slaves and, most significantly, female slaves.¹⁴² Modern historians have frequently followed the example of the *Domesday* commissioners and ignored such domestic slaves because they performed no function that was quantifiable in pragmatic economic terms.¹⁴³ This has resulted in an un-gendered and significantly misleading perspective of slavery in early medieval England.¹⁴⁴

Another source that has helped to reinforce modern ideas concerning the nature of medieval slavery is *Aelfric's Colloquy*. Historians using *Domesday* have frequently cited this text in order to justify the view that most Anglo-Saxon slaves were male and involved in agricultural labour.¹⁴⁵ The author of the *Colloquy*, Aelfric, was a reform-minded scholar and abbot

way to reconcile slavery's productivity and economic growth with evidence of paternalism, slave resistance, or social imbalance and decay." "Looking at Slavery from a Broader Perspective", *AHR*, vol. 105, no. 2, April, 2000, pp. 452–466, 465. Similarly, Hartman has argued that liberal treatment and incentives were an effective aid to slave subjugation in the ante-bellum deep south, S. V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) pp. 3–13.

¹⁴⁰ Weldon Finn, *Domesday Book A Guide*, p. 34, Moore, "Domesday Slavery", pp. 209, 213. Pelteret, *Slavery*, p. 65.

¹⁴¹ Pelteret, *Slavery*, pp. 188–189.

¹⁴² Pelteret, *Slavery*, pp. 189, 202–203.

¹⁴³ Examples/Weldon Finn, *Domesday Book A Guide*, p. 34. Hallam, *Agrarian History*, pp. 66–68. Harvey, "Extent and Profitability", pp. 45–73.

¹⁴⁴ For an alternative perspective see S.M. Stuard, "Ancillary Evidence for the Decline of Medieval Slavery", *P&P*, cxlix, 1995, pp. 3–28.

¹⁴⁵ For examples see Moore, "Domesday Slavery", pp. 212–213 Pelteret, *Slavery*, pp. 64–65, 200, 242.

of the Benedictine monastery of Eynsham (c. 950–1010). He composed the text in around 1000 for use as a grammatical teaching aid; it takes the form of a formulaic set of questions and answers concerning the various occupations within early medieval English society.¹⁴⁶ In reference to the occupation of ploughman the master/narrator asks if he works hard and ‘the ploughmen’ (i.e. his pupils) were prompted by the text to reply “It is hard work, sir, because I am not free.”¹⁴⁷ Historians have drawn some significant conclusions from this somewhat brief extract. For example, Harvey has argued that the *Domesday* evidence is reaffirmed by the “dramatised contemporary impression” extant in the *Colloquy*. As a result she contends that Anglo-Saxon slaves “...were associated particularly with management of the demesne plough oxen.”¹⁴⁸ Yet, Ælfric’s representation of the slave ploughman was clearly an elitist and stereotypical view of the male slave’s lifestyle.¹⁴⁹ Many Anglo-Saxon slaves were undoubtedly employed in this manner; yet, sources such as the Anglo-Saxon wills allude to a great deal many other slave occupations besides. Slaves might be concubines, domestic servants or skilled craftsmen such as wrights, weavers, seamstresses, cooks, millers, fullers, goldsmiths or even as literate priests.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, by focussing predominantly upon the male agricultural slave modern historians have failed to recognise the powerful significance and widespread nature of female slave ownership.¹⁵¹ In addition, the *Will of Æthelgifu* clearly reveals

¹⁴⁶ See G.N. Garmonsway, “The Development of the Colloquy” in P. Clemoes (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons* (London: Bowes and Bowes, 1959), pp. 248–261.

¹⁴⁷ ‘*Geleof micel gedeorf hit ys, forþam ic neom freoh.*’ Ælfric’s *Colloquy*, G.N. Garmonsway (ed.) (London: Methuen, 1939), line 35, p. 21, translation from *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, M. Swanton (ed. and trans.) (London: Dent, 1975), pp. 107–109.

¹⁴⁸ However, she does note that slaves would have filled many other “time consuming and specialised occupations.” See S. Harvey, “Domesday England”, Hallam, *Agrarian History*, p. 65. Clarke, similarly notes that the slaves who featured in *Domesday* “were the successors to Ælfric’s ploughman.” See Clarke, “Domesday Slavery (Adjusted for Slaves)”, p. 41. See also Moore, “Domesday Slavery”, pp. 212–213 and Pelteret, *Slavery*, pp. 64–65, 200, 242.

¹⁴⁹ Anderson feels that the ploughman symbolically represented the *laboratores* within the Ælfric’s conception of the three orders of society, see E.R. Anderson, “Social Idealism in Ælfric’s Colloquy” in P. Clemoes (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon England 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 153–162, 157.

¹⁵⁰ It is likely that such slave craftsmen and craftswomen would have been recorded within *Domesday* by their occupation rather than by their status. *ASW*, pp. 11, 13, 15. *Wō.Æ*, lines 10, 15, 16, 50–51.

¹⁵¹ Despite their apparent preoccupation with the male agricultural slave both John Moore and David Pelteret acknowledge that the *Domesday* commissioners substantially underestimated the female slave population see Pelteret, *Slavery*, p. 189 and Moore, “Domesday Slavery”, pp. 217–219.

that manumitted slaves might be given slaves of their own which suggests that slave owning was far from an exclusive preserve of the aristocracy.¹⁵² As Woolf has recently suggested, it is very likely that slave ownership in medieval British communities “penetrated a long way down the social scale...most rural households probably included some slaves.”¹⁵³ This is significant because if peasant farmers also owned slaves then these individuals would not have been included within the *Domesday* survey.¹⁵⁴ As a consequence, it seems likely that the slave numbers recorded within *Domesday* have been grossly underestimated.

Ruth Mazo Karras has noted that in medieval Scandinavia large-scale agricultural exploitation was negligible.¹⁵⁵ Despite this, slave ownership was prolific among farming households and many slaves existed and worked alongside their peasant masters.¹⁵⁶ Given the similarities in life-style and culture, together with the extensive Scandinavian settlement of the Danelaw, it does not seem unreasonable to suggest a similar situation for Anglo-Saxon England. Yet, medieval historians have often overlooked this possibility. They have chosen instead to argue that the low numbers of slaves reported by the *Domesday* commissioners in the Danelaw were a result of the influx of free Danish settlers in that region. Weldon Finn felt that these Scandinavian colonists had acted as a progressive influence in England because “...with their high proportion of free peasants, slavery had virtually died out.”¹⁵⁷ Yet, such sentiments are directly contradicted by the weight of the primary evidence and secondary evidence illustrating the slave-owning nature of Scandinavian society.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, it is now widely accepted that the *Domesday* commissioners for the Danelaw must have excluded the majority of the slave population from their figures.¹⁵⁹ In spite of

¹⁵² *Wo.E*, lines 15–19, 26–27, 50–51, 53–54.

¹⁵³ A. Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba: Scotland, 789 to 1070* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 20.

¹⁵⁴ Such slaves would have worked for the sokemen who themselves were often omitted from the record, see Pelteret, *Slavery*, p. 191.

¹⁵⁵ See also Iversen, *Trelldommen*, pp. 145–149, 167–180.

¹⁵⁶ Karras, *Slavery and Society*, pp. 76–79.

¹⁵⁷ Weldon Finn, *Domesday Book A Guide*, p. 34. Hallam, *Agrarian History*, p. 69.

¹⁵⁸ See amongst other works Karras, *Slavery and Society*, Iversen, *Trelldommen*, N. Skyum-Nielsen “Nordic Slavery in an International Setting”, *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 11, 1978–1979, pp. 126–148, Thomas Lindkvist and Janken Myrdal (eds.) *Trälar. Ofria i agrarsamhället från vikingatid till medeltid* (Stockholm: Nordiska Museet, 2003).

¹⁵⁹ Moore, “Domesday Slavery”, pp. 198–200, D. Pelteret, “Slavery in the Danelaw” in R. Samson (ed.), *Social Approaches to Viking Studies* (Glasgow: Cruithne, 1991), pp. 179–191, p. 182.

this, many historians are still reluctant to acknowledge that the most likely reason for this omission was the small-scale (or domestic) nature of slave ownership within this region.

This is best exemplified by Sally Harvey's paper "The extent and Profitability of Demesne Agriculture in England in the late Eleventh Century" which was published in 1983. In this paper Harvey uses the *Domesday* evidence in an attempt to illustrate that slavery was disappearing before the dynamic forces of the market economy within late Anglo-Saxon society. Her argument (which is very similar to the arguments of Smith, Millar, Bloch and, more recently, Henning) runs like this; manors with large demesnes were farmed intensively by conservative lords who "clung tenaciously to slave labour" in spite of its unprofitable nature.¹⁶⁰ Paradoxically, the free Anglo-Saxon peasant farmer constituted an efficient and productive unit that was "...more suited than demesne agriculture to the mid and later eleventh-century economy and more successful in maximising returns."¹⁶¹ Consequently, vibrant areas like Kent that had "...a traditionally free peasantry, produced the highest total returns of any county."¹⁶² Yet, Harvey's manipulation of the *Domesday* evidence is highly questionable. As I have already argued the absence of slaves within the *Domesday* figures does not necessarily prove that slaves were not present on the farms and houses of the small producer. If Harvey's contention concerning the highly productive free peasantry of Kent is correct, her argument still fails to explain why, even according to *Domesday*, nearly ten per cent of the Kentish population were still slaves in 1086.¹⁶³ Indeed, Harvey's argument would appear to reveal a great deal more about the free market ideology of the 1980's than it does about slavery in medieval England.

Defining Slavery

Moses Finley has argued that in the ancient world slavery and freedom were not viewed as polarised opposites but as part of a continuum of status.¹⁶⁴ Freedom, as we conceive it, was not a meaningful category

¹⁶⁰ Harvey, "Extent and Profitability", p. 69.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 71.

¹⁶³ Moore, "Domesday Slavery", p. 193.

¹⁶⁴ M.I. Finley, "Between Slavery and Freedom" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. vi (1963-1964) pp. 233-249, p. 249.

because the varying statuses “shaded one into the other.”¹⁶⁵ He feels that modern scholarship has found this hard to comprehend because “...we have been unable to emancipate ourselves from the slave-free autonomy.”¹⁶⁶ In medieval societies freedom might have many meanings; almost the entire population would have been legally dependent on some other party. The social dichotomies imposed by modern historians often appear arbitrary when we consider that medieval writers amalgamated free and unfree, slaves and serfs, dependants and peasants into a conceptual melting pot that represented all those with servile status.¹⁶⁷ In the societies of medieval Britain slaves might be able to marry, have families and cottages with plots, and even acquire property. Yet, despite this they remained tainted by the stigma of servitude in the eyes of their peers. If we measure such customary rights against our own conception of slavery then these individuals might not be classified as slaves. Nevertheless, their own society clearly regarded them as such. This is because slavery is predominantly a cultural phenomenon, which is socially constructed in many different ways by many different societies.¹⁶⁸ As Karras has perceptively argued,

...distinctions between status were often governed by intangible cultural factors and not economic ones... Freedom and unfreedom are matters of categorisation, of labelling by society, and not of economic role or weight of personal obligations.¹⁶⁹

Within the medieval psyche slavery and freedom were intimately associated conditions. We should not be surprised at this because, “...it

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 248.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 249. Yet, it is clear that slavery was viewed in the way that Finley describes within Anglo-Saxon society. This is illustrated by the writings of Archbishop Wulfstan of York “And Lo! Often it happens that a slave acquires freedom from a ceorl, and a ceorl attains through the gift of an eorl the legal rank of thegn, and the thegn attains through the gift of a king the legal rank of an eorl.” (“*And la, oft hit getimað, þæt þeowellinge gearnað freotes æt ceorle, and ceorl wyrð þurh eorligfe þegenlage wyrðe and þegn wurð þurh cyninges gif eorlomen wyrðe.*”) *Die “Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical”*, K. Jost (ed.) (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1959), pp. 110–114, translation from Swanton, *ASP*, p. 133, see also Pelteret, *Slavery*, p. 94.

¹⁶⁷ In the thirteenth century Beaumanoir, speaking of Capetian France, refers generally to the *serfs* being a single class of people, but qualifies this by noting “...this manner of people are not all of one condition, but there are several conditions of servitude.” (“*Et ceste maniere de gens ne sont pas tuit d’une condicion, ainçois sunt plusieurs condicions de servitudes.*”) *Phillippe de Beaumanoir, Coutumes de Beauvaisis*, vol. ii., A. Salmon (ed. and trans.) (Paris: Picard, 1970), 1452, p. 234. See also Karras, *Slavery and Society*, p. 37.

¹⁶⁸ Karras, *Slavery and Society*, p. 23.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

is reasonable that those who most denied freedom as well as to those whom it was most denied were most alive to it.”¹⁷⁰ However, many historians have failed to recognise this and have therefore attempted to impose modern conceptions of freedom on the past. This has resulted in unfruitful and misleading interpretations such as Harvey’s that regard the existence of medieval slavery to have been somehow incompatible with the existence of a free peasantry. Nevertheless, Adam Smith was clearly aware of the relationship between freedom and slavery in eighteenth-century society as he commented with some bitterness that “...the freer the people the more miserable are the slaves.”¹⁷¹ Smith’s contemporary, the politician Edmund Burke, was also very aware of the intimate connection between freedom and slavery. In 1775 Burke delivered a speech to parliament in which he was attempting to explain the reasons for the independent and arrogant spirit of the colonies of America’s Deep South. He commented that

There is however a circumstance attending these Colonies, which in my opinion...makes the spirit of liberty still more high and haughty than those to the Northward. It is that in Virginia and the Carolinas, they have a vast multitude of slaves. Where this is the case in any part of the world, those who are free are by far the most proud and jealous of their freedom. Freedom is to them not only an enjoyment, but a rank and privilege...The fact is so; and these people of the Southern Colonies are much more strongly, and with a higher and more stubborn spirit, attached to liberty than those to the Northward. Such were all the ancient commonwealths: such were our Gothick ancestors...and such will be all masters of slaves, who are not slaves themselves. In such people the haughtiness of domination combines with the spirit of freedom, fortifies it, and renders it invincible.¹⁷²

When viewed from Burke’s perspective the tremendous cultural significance of slavery becomes readily apparent.

Within the societies of medieval Britain, then, behavioural norms were influenced by notions of rank and social standing in opposition to those in the lower orders who were deemed to be naturally inferior and even polluted.¹⁷³ The marginality of the slave was therefore used to define the community’s hierarchy and to reinforce collective iden-

¹⁷⁰ Patterson, *Social Death*, p. ix.

¹⁷¹ Smith, *Jurisprudence*, p. 185.

¹⁷² E. Burke, *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, vol. i, P. Langford et al. (eds.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 122–123.

¹⁷³ Samson, “End”, p. 104.

tity and morality.¹⁷⁴ In these societies direct exploitation and naked power were avenues toward honour, prestige and status. Slavery was not simply an institution concerned with the manipulation of labour and financial gain; it also had a strong psychological facet. The slave's total lack of honour enabled the master to appropriate that person as an extension or surrogate of his or her own honour.¹⁷⁵ It is also likely that this medieval British institution had profound sexual characteristics that are closely analogous to the slave systems that existed in the Middle East during the medieval and early modern periods. This is an area that has received little attention within modern historiography; yet, the contemporary evidence suggests it was an important feature of the institution.

In most slaving cultures the institution of slavery has had a strong sexual facet that is often intimately associated with wider prestige networks and systems of patriarchy.¹⁷⁶ This sexual facet may be one of the most unpleasant, yet significant, characteristics of an unpleasant institution. Despite this, considerations concerning the sexual nature of the institution of slavery have frequently been underplayed or ignored within modern historical discourse. Indeed, strong analogies may be drawn between the avoidance of the subject of sexual behaviour and the avoidance of the subject of slavery within the historiography of the medieval period. In addition, historiographical views concerning the nature of civilisation have often been closely associated with morality and sexual behaviour.¹⁷⁷ However, the sexual behaviour of individuals depicted within the historical sources does not always correspond with modern behavioural sensibilities. As a consequence, some historians have ignored this subject altogether whilst others have regarded such behaviour to have been detrimental to the cultural development of past societies. For example, during the early 1960's Norman Cantor argued

¹⁷⁴ Patterson, *Social Death*, p. 47.

¹⁷⁵ Patterson, *Social Death*, p. 78.

¹⁷⁶ See Taylor, "Ambushed by a Grotesque", pp. 229–230. The term patriarchy will be used in this study to describe the institutionalised system through which powerful men dominated, not only women but also all those individuals who were under their protection or guardianship irrespective of their biological gender. See N. Abercrombie et al. (eds.), *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology* (2nd edn. Harmondsworth/Penguin 1988), p. 181.

¹⁷⁷ Michel Foucault clearly illustrates this association in his *The History of Sexuality*, R. Hurley (trans.) (London: Allen Lane, 1979), pp. 1–14. See also V.L. Bullough, "Sex in History" in J. Murray and K. Eisenbichler (eds.), *Desire and Discipline: Sex and Sexuality in the Pre-Modern West* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 12–23, 9–10.

that both Roman and Arabic societies were fundamentally flawed and destined to collapse because both sanctioned the homosexual penetration of less powerful male partners, especially young male slaves. This was a practice that Cantor regarded as "...a fundamental debilitating factor in any civilisation."¹⁷⁸ We have already seen that very similar comments have been made about the inhibiting effects that the institution of slavery had on the development of civilisation and this may be no coincidence.¹⁷⁹ It is possible that historians have often, either consciously or unconsciously, recognised that total power over an individual is analogous to, and accompanied by, the sexual possession of either the male or the female slave. Certain historians, like Cantor, have viewed the practice of rape, sexual promiscuity and homosexuality as morally corrupting towards the progress of civilisation. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that all of these actions are also implicitly associated with the process of enslavement and subjection.¹⁸⁰

Sexual slavery is most commonly associated with the Arab societies of the medieval and early modern era, with their associated harems and systems of concubinage. It has been argued that the primary purpose of the institution of slavery within these societies was for the sexual gratification of the master class.¹⁸¹ Yet, the accumulation and sexual exploitation of female slaves was also fundamentally significant for defining gender identities, power relationships and patriarchal systems within these societies.¹⁸² Gordon has argued that the overtly sexual nature of Arab slavery is what distinguished it from Western forms of the institution. He feels that Christian ideals concerning monogamy had ensured that slave women in Western European societies "...were generally not sexually at the disposal of their masters."¹⁸³ However,

¹⁷⁸ N. Cantor, *Medieval History. The Life and Death of a Civilisation* (New York: Collier-Macmillan, 1963), p. 31. However, as Bullough points out, Roman sexual behaviour was actually at its most unorthodox during the height of Roman power, "Sex in History", p. 6.

¹⁷⁹ Wyatt, "Significance", pp. 330–338.

¹⁸⁰ Patterson, *Social Death*, pp. 50, 206, 231, 260, Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 70.

¹⁸¹ Gordon, *Arab World*, pp. 84–85.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 84–87 see also M.G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, Conscience and History in World Civilisation*, vol. ii (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 141–146.

¹⁸³ Gordon, *Arab World*, pp. 83–84. He qualifies this statement by admitting that the sexual abuse of slave women did occur in the Ante-Bellum South but he feels that this was only incidental to the economically driven nature of slavery there.

even in the highly Christianised and race-conscious communities of the Ante-Bellum South slave owners were notoriously promiscuous with their female slaves.¹⁸⁴ In this society masters strictly controlled slave relationships and marriages and they would often separate these unions on the slightest whim.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, much of the violence that the masters directed against their slaves had a strong sexual content. Adult slaves were frequently beaten while naked and adolescent slaves were denied underwear to highlight their sexual availability. Masters would often deliberately destabilise family relationships by interposing themselves between slave parents and their children. Children were forced to watch their parents being beaten and at worse they could be sold off and separated from them forever.¹⁸⁶ Similar sexual violence has pervaded most slave systems because sexual domination and total control over the procreative abilities of the slave are fundamental tools in the process of subjection and dehumanisation. In order to totally degrade the slave a master must manipulate any sense of positive regard that they might have for their sexuality.¹⁸⁷ As Gilberto Freyre, a historian of Brazilian slavery has put it "...there is no slavery without sexual depravity."¹⁸⁸

During the nineteenth century anti-slavery accounts concerning the mistreatment of slaves frequently focused in detail on the sexual abuse of slaves. In these accounts the appalling physical violence done to the slave was often less of an issue than their sexual accessibility and nakedness. The victims of beatings (most often female) were portrayed as passive figures whose public nakedness was of greater concern than their wounds. Abolitionists appear to have regarded such sexually explicit punishments as a yardstick with which to measure how far slave owning societies had become removed from the morality of 'civilised' British

¹⁸⁴ See A.S. Parent and S. Brown Wallace, "Childhood and Sexual Identity under Slavery", *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 3, 1992–1993, pp. 363–401. The same was true for the British slave masters in the West Indies see, R. Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality, the British Experience* (Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 92–94.

¹⁸⁵ Even to the extent that they would violently remove a male slave from his bed in order to climb in and copulate that slave's partner; see Parent and Brown Wallace, "Childhood", p. 392.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 363–401.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 381.

¹⁸⁸ Quote from Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality*, p. 93.

society.¹⁸⁹ At first glance, this attitude would seem to be very much a product of the high-moral outlook of the Victorian age. Yet, Christian associations connecting slavery with sexual accessibility and sinfulness had extremely deep roots in British culture. Indeed, attitudes that appear to be strongly analogous to these nineteenth-century concerns can be clearly identified in the early medieval period.¹⁹⁰ Such attitudes have frequently been ignored or overlooked by historians yet they are extremely significant. They indicate not only the overtly sexual nature of slavery in this period but, also, the importance of female protection and guardianship for the societies of medieval Britain.

The modern English word ‘slave’ is essentially un-gendered, it can refer either to a male or a female.¹⁹¹ This seems a fairly obvious statement to make but it is important to recognise this because an un-gendered terminology has frequently encouraged and conditioned an un-gendered, or at least male-focussed, perspective in the discourse on slavery in the medieval era. Yet, the indigenous medieval languages of Britain and Ireland all had extensive terminologies associated with slavery and slave-holding which were, by and large, clearly demarcated by gender. With this gendered perspective in mind, we will now attempt to reach a working definition of slavery in the medieval British and Irish contexts.

Medieval slavery has traditionally been defined through legal status. The contemporary law codes, many of which were heavily influenced by Roman law, generally, identify the slave as property, as a chattel; a human being who is owned by another human being.¹⁹² By this definition the slave is devoid of rights and has no legal entitlement to property of their own, to family life, or, indeed, protection from the arbitrary violence of their masters.¹⁹³ Definitions of status in relation to economic factors, so significant for Marxist and anti-Marxist debates, both compliment and interface with such legal interpretations. From an economic perspective, slaves are defined as those who labour under the direct control of their masters who appropriate and benefit

¹⁸⁹ H Altink, “‘An outrage against all decency’: The Abolitionist Discussion of the Flogging of Jamaican Slave Women in the Period 1770–1834”, *Slavery and Abolition*, vol. 23, 2, 2002, pp. 107–122.

¹⁹⁰ These attitudes are discussed in chapter 3.

¹⁹¹ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 16.

¹⁹² Patterson, *Social Death*, pp. 28–32, Karras, *Slavery and Society*, pp. 6–9, Pelteret, *Slavery*, p. 81.

¹⁹³ Karras, *Slavery and Society*, pp. 6–9.

from the produce of those slaves.¹⁹⁴ Both of these types of definition are useful but also, in some senses, very limiting. Indeed, legal criteria are problematic because the legal norms of a given society might not reflect actual social and cultural practices that were not enshrined in the law codes.¹⁹⁵

Furthermore, if legal definitions are employed as essential criterion for establishing the existence of slavery then this, in turn, would suggest that slaves cannot exist in non-literate pre-state societies; a contention which it would be extremely difficult to support.¹⁹⁶ We have already seen that definitions that focus on economic exploitation of the slave can also be flawed because, in the medieval context, intensive labour exploitation was not always the primary motivation behind slave holding.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, economically centred definitions lead to un-gendered and misleading perspectives of this medieval institution.

Slavery has also been defined in relation to social exclusion and kinlessness or 'natal alienation'.¹⁹⁸ Through in-group/out-group constructions societies therefore define the slave as a kinless outsider; a deracinated human being who, through their exclusion reinforce a sense of group identity, cohesion and belonging amongst non-slaves.¹⁹⁹ Orlando Patterson has defined slavery as "...the permanent, violent domination of natally alienated and generally dishonoured persons."²⁰⁰ His focus on the significance of honour for defining slavery may be particularly applicable for the warrior societies of medieval Europe in which powerful and emotive codes of honour had fundamental social significance. Yet, Patterson's perspective and more traditional legal and economic definitions of slavery are not wholly mutually exclusive, rather they reinforce one another. In the ante-Bellum Deep South slaves were not legally permitted to have families and were therefore kinless because they were legally the property of another individual.²⁰¹ In the medieval Welsh and Irish context the slave's status as an outsider or alien made

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 9–10.

¹⁹⁵ As Karras argues "A person may have no legal rights to own property or to marry but may do so without formal rights, protected by long-standing custom (in a non-legal sense of habit)", Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁹⁶ Taylor, "Ambushed by a Grotesque", p. 227.

¹⁹⁷ Patterson, *Social Death*, p. 99.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 5–14, 38–45.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 13.

²⁰¹ J.E. Philips, "Slavery as a Human Institution", *Afrika Zamani*, 11 & 12, 2003–2004, pp. 25–45, 27 and "Slavery and Human Evolution" unpublished paper delivered at

them more valuable as a form of legal property.²⁰² In Old Irish law the protection of runaway slaves was strictly prohibited; a practise which clearly reinforced group identity.²⁰³

Following Patterson's ideas, Ruth Mazo Karras has defined slavery as "...first and foremost a conceptual category, a way of labelling and classifying people".²⁰⁴ This statement is certainly valid but might be regarded as relegating the harsh realities of slavery to the more passive realm of ideas.²⁰⁵ John Edward Philips, has highlighted that it is the cognitive process of labelling, rather than the labels themselves that are important. This cognitive process is not only significant for those who hold slaves, or indeed, the wider community that constructs and participates in the institution, but also for the enslaved individual themselves (the italics in this quote are mine).

In an absolute sense there is no slavery, there have only been a finite number of persons held for a limited time (even if often to the end of their lives) *in conditions considered by themselves and/or others to be slavery*. Those conditions have varied widely, not only from society to society but from time to time in the same society, *and often even for the same slave at different times in his or her life*... Slavery, like money, is an abstract, artificial human-created institution. Again, like money, it is, of course, very real and powerful, but it is still clearly theoretical and metaphorical in its inception...²⁰⁶

Philips therefore highlights how slavery is a creation of human theorizing. In reality, no individual is biologically kinless at birth or naturally brought forth into the world as a chattel. Rather, such conditions are psychologically induced and socially reproduced through the cognitive processes of subjection and systems of human organisation.²⁰⁷

Most historians accept that slavery is a highly contextual phenomenon. Differing cultural constructions of the institution mean that

the WISE conference, Hull University, 'Slavery: Unfinished Business', 16–19th May, 2007, p. 7, by kind permission of Dr. Philips.

²⁰² See *The Ancient Laws of Ireland*, J.O. O'Donovan (ed. and trans.) (Dublin: H.M.S.O., 1901), vol. v, p. 111 and *The Law of Hywel Dda*, D. Jenkins (ed. & trans) (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1986), pp. 155, 167. See also Chapter 4.

²⁰³ *CIH*, 47.1, see also Kelly, *Guide*, p. 95. In addition, the law text *Di Astud Chirt 7 Dligid* expressed strong disapproval of lords who released their slaves, suggesting that such an act would cause their corn, milk and fruit to fail, see Kelly, *Guide*, p. 96. The twelfth-century Welsh law code *Llyfr Cyfnerth* states that all Welshmen have innate nobility provided that they are "without slave and without alien [blood]", see Chapter 2.

²⁰⁴ Karras, *Slavery and Society*, p. 6.

²⁰⁵ Iversen, *Trelldommen*, p. 285.

²⁰⁶ Philips, "Slavery as a Human Institution", pp. 25–26.

²⁰⁷ "Slaves are made by humans, not by nature." Ibid.

conceptions of slaves can be varied and socially specific. In applying modern categorizations of slavery to the medieval past, historians too, are constructing the institution for analytical purposes.²⁰⁸ Yet, Philips' ideas about cognitive process are extremely useful because, although he recognises the highly contextual and somewhat arbitrary nature of the institution, he highlights how similarities in the cognitive processes that 'create' slavery have universality. This universality allows for highly interchangeable and flexible conceptualisations that transcend more specific or localised social and cultural norms.²⁰⁹ Philip's argument is terrifying but nonetheless persuasive:

...most human societies have a category that is understood as 'slave' in other societies, despite the fact that the actual legal definitions of slavery in the societies in question are very different... Despite these differences, there is a bundle of properties... that together combine to explain what is a slave. These properties are sufficiently related to make slavery a cross-cultural category, a very human institution in that slaves were easily transferable between societies that might have very different idealized cognitive models of slavery... There is something terribly human, even (dread the thought!) natural, about slavery...²¹⁰

Philips goes on to argue that the universality of the institution of slavery has a lot to do with human evolution and survival. Humans are social animals with complex communication skills, they need to exist within wider groups in order survive and flourish. Therefore, an isolated human will often attach themselves to the nearest available group and follow any strategy necessary to incorporate themselves into that group.²¹¹ In this respect, in many pre-industrial cultures, slavery was about assimilation and eventual incorporation into the group, although such a process might well take generations. Alex Woolf has suggested, similarly, that enslavement should be closely associated with processes of assimilation and incorporation in late Iron-Age societies of Western Europe.²¹² This assimilative aspect of slavery might even

²⁰⁸ Karras, *Slavery and Society*, pp. 11–12.

²⁰⁹ This explains why white Europeans were able to successfully enslave West Africans who, unlike the indigenous native populations of the Caribbean, had a very clear understanding of slavery because it existed within their own cultures, even if in a very different form to intensive New World plantation slavery.

²¹⁰ Philips, "Slavery as a Human Institution", p. 32.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

²¹² A. Woolf, "At Home in the Long Iron Age: A Dialogue between Households and Individuals in Cultural Reproduction", J. Moore et al. (eds) *Invisible People and Processes*:

be evident in major slave societies such as Ancient Rome.²¹³ The Latin word *servus* derives from the verb *servare* meaning to 'save' or 'protect' clearly denoting the conceptualisation of slavery as a commutation of death with patriarchal pretensions.²¹⁴ However, we must take care not to view such assimilative processes in too positive a light. As Patterson has revealed, the enslaved individual's life might be spared, but their self identity and personhood are nonetheless rendered obsolete or 'socially dead.'²¹⁵

When slavery is viewed from this assimilative perspective then the profound cognitive processes that 'create' the condition are also thrown into sharper relief. Slavery is revealed as a relationship of deep psychological dependence induced by a number of factors which might include the constant threat of violence, kinlessness, shame and a lack of personnel power.²¹⁶ In the medieval context, the intensely personal nature of the psychological dependence inherent in the condition of slavery would have been dramatically emphasised and reinforced by the close physical proximity between masters/mistresses and their slaves.

Writing Gender and Childhood into European Archaeology (London/New York: Leicester University Press, 1997) pp. 68–74, 70–74.

²¹³ Philips, "Slavery and Human Evolution", p. 18, Woolf, "At Home", p. 71, Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, pp. 92–96.

²¹⁴ Woolf, "At Home", p. 71.

²¹⁵ Patterson, *Social Death*, pp. 38–45.

²¹⁶ Philips, "Slavery and Human Evolution", p. 21. During the late 1970's Psychologists identified the, now well known, phenomenon of Stockholm syndrome. Based on analysis in the aftermath of a hostage situation during a bank robbery in Stockholm, researchers found that the situation created a brief but intense dependence which resulted in hostages regressing into a kind of child-like state of dependence and leading them to identify positively with their captors. The behavioural conditions evident in Stockholm syndrome have subsequently been applied by Huddleston-Mattai and Mattai to the plight of the African slave in the ante-Bellum Deep South. They have argued that the realities of survival had a dramatic impact upon the enslaved individual's personality and disposition making it likely that they would adopt, at least nominally, aspects of the master's value system, see B. Huddleston-Mattai and P. Rudy Mattai "The Sambo-Mentality and Stockholm Syndrome Revisited: Another Dimension to an Examination of the Plight of the African-American" *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 23, 3, March 1993, pp. 344–357, 346. Huddleston-Mattai and Mattai's arguments are problematic and have, more recently, been challenged. Nevertheless, in his highly acclaimed narrative the ex-slave Frederick Douglass made it clear that fights did occur between slaves from different households regarding who had the best master, F. Douglass *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave Written by Himself*, W.L. Andrews and W.S. McFeely (eds) (New York/London: W.W. Norton & Co, 1997), chapter iii, p. 22. We can only speculate as to how far the life of Wulfwaru, the personal slave servant manumitted for good service by her mistress, Wynflæd, in England during the central decades of the eleventh century, might have been conditioned by similar strategies.

Most households in early medieval Europe would have existed in buildings of one or two rooms making the relationships between individuals of differing social categories very intimate indeed.²¹⁷ Moreover, it is likely that slaves would have had a role in caring for, educating and raising the free children of the household. The intimate nature of such relationships is all the more profound when we view the institution of slavery from a gendered perspective. Indeed, Woolf suggests that the typical adult within late Iron Age and early medieval societies would not have been the free male, but rather the female slave who, he argues, "...were probably the largest of the four categories of adults: free women, free men, unfree women, unfree men."²¹⁸ Whether or not one accepts Woolf's contention, the medieval sources certainly suggest that female slaves formed a far larger category of the population, both free and unfree, than most modern research on the topic would suggest.²¹⁹ Furthermore, profound psychologically manifested expressions of shame and dishonour, especially in relation to gender identification and sexual accessibility appear to have been of crucial significance to cognitive processes of enslavement within slave societies more generally.

In the medieval West, as in many other historical contexts, conceptions of slavery were bound up with ideas of shame and intimately related to wider expressions of honour and dishonour.²²⁰ To be a slave was to exist in a constant state of shame, to hold slaves was to express one's honour and subsume, or indeed consume, the honour of those in your power.²²¹ But what is honour and what is shame? Are they emotions, psychological states, physical realities or culturally conditioned sensibilities? Psychologists have identified nine biological reactions or 'affects' which appear in response to emotional stimulation, these include

²¹⁷ Woolf, "At Home", p. 72. In the early second century AD the Roman writer Tacitus commented of the Germanic household "You cannot distinguish between master and slave by the delicacy of their upbringing; they live together among the same flocks and on the same earth floor..." Tacitus, *Agricola and Germany*, A.R. Birley (ed and trans) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 48.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 68, A contention supported by Stuard, "Ancillary", pp. 3–4.

²¹⁹ With a few notable exceptions e.g. Karras, "Desire, Descendants and dominance: Slavery, The Exchange of Women and Masculine Power" in Frantzen and Moffat, *Work of Work*, pp. 16–29' pp. 16–30, Stuard, "Ancillary", pp. 2–28, Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, pp. 16–21.

²²⁰ Patterson, *Social Death*, pp. 77–101, Philips, "Slavery and Evolution", pp. 13–17, Aldhouse-Green, "Chaining and Shaming", pp. 320–321.

²²¹ Patterson, *Social Death*, p. 81, Philips, "Slavery and Evolution", p. 13.

‘enjoyment-joy’, ‘fear-terror’ and ‘shame-humiliation’.²²² These affects manifest themselves through physical posture, respiration/circulation and facial expressions. The ‘shame-humiliation’ affect is therefore a direct physiological reaction to a given social situation or situations. It results in a distinct physical posture and demeanour.

Shame produces a sudden loss of muscle tone in the neck and upper body; increases skin temperature on the face, frequently resulting in a blush; and causes a brief period of in-coordination and apparent disorganization. No matter what behaviour is in progress when shame affect is triggered, it will be made momentarily impossible. Shame interrupts, halts, takes over, inconveniences, trips up, makes incompetent anything that had previously been interesting or enjoyable.²²³

The shame affect is an absolutely essential component of the cognitive process of enslavement.²²⁴ Thus, the psychological state of shame, induced through a loss of bodily control, manifests itself through physical symptoms which diminish an individual’s abilities.

Without shame affect slavery would probably be impossible, both to create and sustain. It is not an accident that most great slave societies have been obsessed with questions of honour and shame... Slave shame is compounded by powerlessness and an inability to defend oneself from assault. [see fig. 2]²²⁵

Clear correlations exist between reactions to the shame affect and gender identification more broadly, especially in relation to concepts of masculinity. In highly honorific cultures which value military prowess shame and defeat are perceived in terms of lost masculinity and feminisation. This has resulted in close associations between the status of slaves and the status of both women and children in many slave holding cultures.²²⁶ This is not to suggest that free and non-slave women/children

²²² Philips, “Slavery and Evolution”, p. 14.

²²³ D. Nathanson, *Shame and Pride: Affect, Sex and the Birth of the Self* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992) from Philips, “Slavery and Evolution”, p. 15.

²²⁴ Philips, “Slavery and Evolution”, p. 15.

²²⁵ Ibid.. Aldhouse-Green has highlighted how late Iron Age warriors felt motivated to repeatedly humiliate and reemphasise the shaming of enslaved vanquished opponents through degrading and brutal rituals. These often included the wearing of slave collars, like those from Lagore Crannog and Lyn Cerrig Bach, which artificially enforced the posture of ‘shame-humiliation’ affect; neck-restraints, for instance, tend to force the head down, concealing the face and directing vision downwards, away from the world, see figure 2, “Ritual Bondage”, p. 157, “Chaining and Shaming”, pp. 320–322.

²²⁶ Philips, “Slavery and Evolution”, p. 16, Woolf “At Home”, pp. 68–72, Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, pp. 24–25, Karras, “Desire”, pp. 16–29.



Figure 2. An archaeology experiment revealing how a chain from Llyn Cerrig Bach (Anglesey) artificially enforced a posture of 'shame-humiliation' forcing the head down, concealing the face and depersonalising the individual. Reproduced by kind permission of the National Museum of Wales.

were regarded as dishonourable in the way that slaves were but rather that the social space of the dependent female/child and the social space of the dependent slave were often conceptualised in very similar ways. Within the context of the late Iron Age/early medieval household Woolf has suggested that there are distinct analogies between the conceptual dichotomies of 'slavery and freedom' and 'male and female'.²²⁷ He regards the role of the female as one that is frequently associated with domination, servility and specifically gendered tasks and this is especially pronounced in relation to marriage because "...marriage and slavery were conditions analogous to childhood." Thus as both wives and slaves

²²⁷ Woolf, "At Home", p. 68.

entered a given community "...without a social identity and unfamiliar with the rules of the house, their happiness and personal security was at a very low premium."²²⁸

Woolf's study is brief and rather speculative but, as we'll see, his ideas do resonate with the primary evidence from the early medieval British context. Glancy has also highlighted the significant association between slavery and gender in her recent study of slavery in the late Roman era. She argues that as slavery was identified with the body it was conceptually inseparable from ideas concerning sexuality and sexual accessibility. Indeed, slaveholders had unrestricted access to the bodies of their slaves; an invasive dimension of the condition which would have been experienced most keenly by female and young male slaves. This dimension was certainly most effective for producing the 'shame-humiliation' affect so crucial to the cognitive process of subjection.²²⁹ Glancy goes on to highlight the close association between slavery and wider patriarchal order in the early Christian context. She argues that slave women and slave holding women often shared the experience of intercourse with the man of the house; they might also share the experiences of pregnancy, child birth and lactation.²³⁰ A slave woman might even be obliged to breast feed the free offspring of her mistress. Yet, the often intimate similarity of female experience undoubtedly created tensions and jealousy thus motivating a constant need to re-emphasise and demarcate the boundaries between free and servile women. Certain specific cultic practices were therefore enacted to ritualize the division between slave holding women and their female slaves.²³¹ For example, during the ritual of *Matralia*, celebrated on June 11, a single defenceless slave woman was ritually beaten by a group of slave holding women. Such rituals suggest that free women would have regarded their husband's sexual relations with his slaves to be both undermining and threatening. The women therefore "...enacted the hostility and jealousy they felt towards their husbands' enslaved sexual partners by ritually abusing a token female slave".²³²

As we will see in the following chapter, a number of medievalists, including Karras and Bitel have drawn very similar conclusions con-

²²⁸ Ibid., p. 71.

²²⁹ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 9.

²³⁰ Ibid., pp. 16–21.

²³¹ Ibid., p. 23.

²³² Ibid., p. 23.

cerning the institution of slavery in relation to gender identification and wider patriarchal systems.²³³ With all of this in mind, we must now draw some conclusions and attempt to define some of the key characteristics which will be used to identify and understand the institution of slavery within the varied social and cultural contexts of the medieval Britain and Ireland during the course of this study.

Slavery is a highly contextual social phenomenon, defined and constructed by different cultures in different ways. Nevertheless, the cognitive processes inherent in psychological subjection mean that differing cultural constructions of slavery have a number of commonly occurring characteristics or traits. These give slavery universality and make its various contextual forms identifiable and recognisable across different cultural boundaries, both geographically and chronologically. These characteristics will generally include many, if not all, of the following:

- Slaves are regarded as human beings who are the property of other human beings.
- Slaves have an almost total lack of legal rights, especially in relation to property, family and physical well-being.
- Slave status is hereditary and transmitted by blood (most often on the feminine side).
- The slave is constantly exposed to physical violence or the threat of violence.
- The slave is constantly exposed to sexual abuse or the threat of that abuse.
- The slave is subject to direct and often intimate exploitation by the master in relation to both labour and procreative abilities.
- The slave has restrictions placed on their physical movement and experiences a loss of power over their body.
- The slave exists in a pervasive state of shame, dishonour and powerlessness.
- The slave experiences a severe loss of self esteem and sense of personhood, especially in relation to gender identity.

²³³ See chapter 2 and L. Bitel, *Land of Women: tales of sex and gender from early Ireland* (Ithaca, N.Y./London: Cornell University Press, 1996) p. 152. R.M. Karras, "Servitude and Sexuality" in G. Pálsson (ed.), *From Sagas to Society: Comparative Approaches to Early Iceland* (Enfield Lock: Hisarlik Press, 1992), pp. 289–304, 300.

- As a corollary of this, the condition of slavery can instil a powerful sense of psychological dependence on the master/mistress.
- The slave is regarded, and may regard themselves, as a deracinated human being and exists (conceptually) as a kinless individual, alienated from the community.
- The status of the slave facilitates wider conceptualisations of group solidarity, social order, power and honour.
- As a corollary of this, both slave holding and non slave-holding individuals participate in and uphold the institution.
- Slave-taking and slave-holding constitute an essential and integral facet of wider social constructions of gender, power and patriarchal order in a given society.

Approaching the Sources

Slaves have often been regarded by medieval historians as invisible people. Any attempt to access the experience and perspective of the medieval slave will inevitably enter the realm of speculation. Nevertheless, slaves *are* actually surprisingly visible in the medieval sources of Britain and Ireland, although we are forced to regard them through the distorted and disdainful gaze of the contemporary literati (usually the educated monks and clerics who were members of the slave holding elite). Slaves are most likely to be glimpsed during dramatic, traumatic or liminal moments in their life-cycles; at times of enslavement and capture, transportation or sale, birth or procreation, manumission or escape, punishment or death.²³⁴ These are the moments during which elite authors, commentators and bureaucrats were most likely to take notice and record the existence of those deracinated human beings against whom community belonging was defined.

The purpose of this study is to highlight the extreme cultural significance of slavery within the societies of medieval Britain and Ireland. The intention is to reveal the institution's fundamental importance for conceptions of power, social order and gender identification. In order to achieve this, my analysis will not be focussed upon economic conditions or even necessarily upon the plight of the slave. Rather, it will concentrate upon the lifestyle, attitudes, and cultural conceptions of the

²³⁴ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 72.

slave-holder and the slave raider. As a result the sources employed will be wide ranging encompassing literary, hagiographical and narrative evidence together with the legal and canonical documentation.

The literary sources will frequently be consulted as a starting point for understanding how these societies configured and conceptualised their social worlds. In particular, the mythical saga evidence may help us to understand the framework around which social and cultural order was defined. Although such literary texts cannot furnish us with a 'knowable' historical reality, they do provide us with a parallel idealistic view of the author's assumptions concerning his society. The production and indeed reproduction of these texts cannot be wholly separated from their geopolitical and social contexts. Indeed, although such stories were frequently set in a legendary and exotic ancient past they spoke directly to, and had a deep resonance for, the shared cultural values of their medieval audiences.²³⁵ The tendency of medieval authors to explore taboos, transgressions, liminal and transitional moments in life-cycle, and to reflect and exaggerate expected behavioural codes and, indeed, serious breaches in these codes reveals a great deal about attitudes towards slavery and gender within these communities.

Hagiographical texts can be employed in a similar manner. The relative abundance of surviving saints' lives provides us with an invaluable indication of changing attitudes, moral concerns and social practices albeit from an ecclesiastical perspective. In spite of the fantastical nature of the hagiographical miracle tales, a great deal of incidental detail was included within these stories in order to make them believable to their audience. They, therefore, contain a significant amount of information that may be regarded as a relatively reliable reflection of contemporary attitudes towards slavery and of everyday relationships with slaves.

The medieval annals and narratives provide us with a surprising amount of information concerning slave-raiding activities and about contemporary perceptions of that institution. The medieval law codes also provide us with a substantial amount of information about slaves and slave holding within these societies. It is acknowledged that these

²³⁵ Millersdaughter has revealed how the *Four Branches of the Mabinogion* (which were written down during the late-eleventh/early-twelfth centuries but which contain elements from much earlier oral traditions) frequently "...intervene into their politically uncertain (twelfth-century) present with representations of an ancient Britain defined by *Cambrian* political integrity and magical military prowess." K. Millersdaughter, "The Geopolitics of incest: sex, gender and violence in the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi", *Exemplaria*, xiv, 2, Fall 2002, pp. 271–316, p. 285.

codes must be approached with great care, as it is difficult to know whether they were ever implemented in reality. Nevertheless, they are an extremely significant source, which, at the very least, provide us with an idealistic version of how these medieval societies were ordered and conceived by their elite.

Penitential texts are another extremely useful source for the study of medieval slavery. These were essentially practical manuals or guides that enabled priests to administer spiritual healing to their flocks by providing penances for their sins. Penitentials originated in Ireland in the early medieval period but soon spread to Anglo-Saxon England, Wales, Scotland and continental Europe. Due to their widespread use and practical nature they remained highly influential upon society throughout the medieval period and provide us with some interesting information concerning the intimate nature of the master/slave relationship. As we have already seen, the complex nature of such relationships is further highlighted within the surviving medieval wills and manumission documents. Moreover, if we are to realise the significance of this institution within these societies then we must examine the evidence for slaves of both genders. We must recognise and acknowledge that the distinctions between freedom and slavery were extremely important for defining wider systems of patriarchy within these societies.

Slavery and Progress: A Self-Reflexive Perspective

Medieval historiography has inherited a powerful legacy from the abolitionist era that closely associates the societies of Britain with Christian civilisation and anti-slavery sentiments. At the beginning of the twentieth century W.E.H. Lecky argued that England's crusade against slavery "...may probably be regarded as among the three or four perfectly virtuous pages comprised in the history of the nations."²³⁶ Similarly, Sir John Harris remarked during the 1930's that Britain's struggle against slavery, "...deserves the admiration and thanks of the civilised world."²³⁷ However, it is extremely important that we do not forget the major role that Britain played in the African slave trade. Indeed, just a few decades before abolition Great Britain had been the world's greatest slaving

²³⁶ Lecky, *European Morals*, vol. i, p. 153.

²³⁷ J. Harris, *Slavery: A World Review* (London: The Anti-slavery and Aborigines Protection Society, 1936), p. 1.

nation. British merchants were largely responsible for establishing the New World slave trade and they greatly profited from it. The irony of Britain's subsequent zeal for abolition was not lost upon the African rulers with whom the British slave traders had previously dealt. The Asante chief Osei Bonsu is said to have remarked that

The white men...do not understand my country, or they would not say that the slave trade was bad. But if they think it bad now, why did they think it good before?²³⁸

More recent historical scholarship has highlighted the powerful and disturbing role that anti-slavery ideology played in the construction of sentiments regarding the superior character and virtue of British civilisation.²³⁹ In the decades following abolition the British became imbued with a proselytising zeal to impose their 'civilised' values upon those whom they now deemed to be 'savages' because of their continuing involvement in slaving activity.²⁴⁰ This abolitionist zeal provided the moral ideology that facilitated the nineteenth-century imperial expansion into Africa. Nineteenth-century British historians played a significant role in the construction of this superior image.²⁴¹ Indeed, the attitudes of some historians reveal how closely anti-slavery ideology may be associated with such racist beliefs. In his book *Wales, Past and Present* (1870) Charles Wilkins expressed his horror concerning the existence of the "hideous" condition of slavery, yet, he goes on to remark that

The African had grown up but a degree above the animal, his lot if he fell into any hands could not be much worse, and if he became the property of a kind master, it was even improved in some respects. But our poor Welshman! With the love of liberty, that was part of their very being...for these (medieval Welshmen) the transition (into slavery) was torture most execrable.²⁴²

²³⁸ I. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evolution of Political Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 263.

²³⁹ H. Temperley, "Anti-Slavery as a Form of Cultural Imperialism" in C. Bolt and S. Drescher (eds.), *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform* (Folkestone: Dawson, 1980), pp. 335–349, see also Davis, "Slavery and 'Progress'", pp. 363–364, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 343.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ H.A. Mac Dougall, *Racial Myth in English History: Trojans, Teutons, and Anglo-Saxons* (Montreal/London: University Press New England, 1982), p. 91.

²⁴² Wilkins, *Wales, Past and Present*, p. 241.

E.A. Freeman expressed similar views in his *History of the Norman Conquest*. Freeman was undoubtedly opposed to slavery. He regarded Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester to be “an unflinching assessor of the eternal principles of right” whose efforts had ended the “evil practice” of slavery in Anglo-Saxon England.²⁴³ Yet, later in the same volume Freeman qualified his arguments concerning Anglo-Saxon slavery under a sub-heading entitled, “The difference between white and black slavery.” Within this sub-section he commented that

...there was one great difference between slavery in earlier and in later times...The great difficulties which have arisen from emancipation of slaves who are unlike their masters in every respect in which a man can be unlike a man, is a difficulty with which Wulfstan and William were not called upon to grapple.²⁴⁴

The prevalence of imperialistic attitudes such as this has undoubtedly affected the historiography of Britain in general. The nineteenth-century Irish historian M.F. Cusack made no mention at all of the slave holding nature of medieval Irish society in his *Illustrated History of Ireland from the Earliest Period*.²⁴⁵ Yet, this omission must be placed within the context of Cusack’s own social and political milieu and his undoubted outrage at the impoverished state of his contemporary countrymen. This is revealed at the beginning of his book when he remarked:

I shall state very briefly the position of the Irish tenant at this present day...the position of the Irish tenant is simply this: he is rather worse off than a slave.²⁴⁶

The residual influence of nineteenth-century attitudes such as Freeman’s have ensured the continuing sensitivity of historical analysis concerning

²⁴³ Freeman, *Norman Conquest*, vol. iv, pp. 380–382.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 481. Freeman further revealed his attitude toward his own racial superiority when he later quipped that the United States would be much a better country, “...if every Irishman should kill a Negro and be hanged for it.” Freeman delivered this comment at a society dinner in New York. He may have been joking, but the comment was still a clear reflection of his attitudes as he notes with some pride that “very many approved” of his suggestion, see *Some Impressions of the United States* (London: Longmans, Green, 1883), p. 139. Later in the same chapter Freeman argues, more seriously, “To the old question, Am I not a man and a brother? I venture to answer: No. The Negro may be a man and a brother in some secondary sense; he is not a man and a brother in the same full sense in which every Western Aryan is a man and a brother. He cannot be assimilated; the laws of nature forbid it.”, pp. 145–146.

²⁴⁵ M.F. Cusack, *An Illustrated History of Ireland from the Earliest Period* (London: Longmans, Green, 1868).

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

slavery. In the 1980's Elizabeth Curtis drew strong comparisons between the English involvement in the African slave trade and the indentured servitude imposed upon the Irish during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in her study *Nothing but the same old Story; The Roots of Anti-Irish Racism*.²⁴⁷ Yet, like her predecessor Cusack, Curtis failed to acknowledge the slave owning nature of pre-Norman Irish society, which she regarded to be "relatively egalitarian."²⁴⁸ This is an example that has been followed by other Irish historians who have sought to distance their medieval forebears from such unsavoury practices. Indeed, Ó Croínín has more recently asserted that "The institution of slavery, and its concomitant, a slave economy, remained alien to the Irish way."²⁴⁹ Such attitudes are understandable given the disparaging and condemnatory nature of pre-twentieth-century English historiography toward medieval Irish society. Furthermore, whilst post-abolitionist sentiments that associate slavery with only backward, barbarous and intensely conservative societies persist, such misleading views will continue to be perpetuated.²⁵⁰

Despite the very genuine motivations of many abolitionist activists, when anti-slavery was taken up by the British government the full potential of this powerful civilising ideology became a justification for pragmatic political expansionism. More subtly it became a subconscious psychological aid endorsing world-wide British hegemony. In short, slavery helped to provide the cash for the technological advances which made Britain great.²⁵¹ Conversely, anti-slavery provided an ideology, which facilitated the continuing British cultural and political dominance of global affairs during the nineteenth century. This ideology was extremely powerful and it has deeply affected historiographical views concerning medieval slavery. Slavery has continued to be almost as emotive an historical subject in Britain as it is in the United States.

²⁴⁷ E. Curtis, *Nothing But the Same Old Story; The Roots of Irish Racism* (London: Information on Ireland, 1984), pp. 21, 28–29, 41–45.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 344.

²⁴⁹ Ó Croínín, *Medieval Ireland*, pp. 268–269.

²⁵⁰ Wendy Davies in a section entitled "outside the mainstream" argued that people in the "Celtic peripheral areas" continued to hold slaves because of the intensively conservative nature of their societies; see "On Servile Status", pp. 238–241. Pelteret argues that Cornwall had a high proportion of slaves because of its "economic underdevelopment", *Slavery*, p. 233. This line of argument is also followed by John Gillingham, *The English in the Twelfth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2000) pp. 46–47, Wyatt, "Significance", p. 344.

²⁵¹ Wyatt, "Significance", p. 344.

This may be because it lies at the root of British industrial power. Furthermore, whilst abolitionism constituted one of the first expressions of popular democracy and lies at the very heart of our civilised self-image of compromise, decency and fair play, it also justified the colonial expansionism into Africa and the epoch of the British Empire. The civilising veneer of British anti-slavery is actually very thin yet very few nationalist historians have been willing to scratch too deeply beneath it.²⁵²

Historians must be extremely self-reflexive if they are to transcend the, still powerful nineteenth-century abolitionist ideology. No historian would want to condone slavery yet, it is important that we understand the reasons for our antipathy towards the institution before we begin to study it. Indeed, historians have frequently failed to recognise the factors that act upon their perceptions of this medieval institution and this has resulted in anachronistic and inaccurate interpretations. Such interpretations have allowed slavery to be compartmentalised in order to reinforce modern ideologies and sensibilities. Modern economic rationales, which seek to uphold capitalist values or emphasise the progressive civilisation of the West, have permeated the historical discourse on slavery. As a result historians have, all too often, focussed their efforts upon explaining the disappearance of this medieval institution rather than seeking to understand it.²⁵³ Moreover, when historians attempt to explain away slavery in this manner they fail to realise the vital importance of the institution for the societies of medieval Britain.

In the following chapter, 'Slavery and Patriarchy', we shall examine the warrior groups that were involved in slave raiding and analyse the profound cultural significance of such activities. This will then be related to a discussion regarding the significance of slavery for wider systems of patriarchy and masculine purchase within the societies of medieval Britain.²⁵⁴ Chapter 3, 'Slavery, Power and Gender' will take

²⁵² It should be noted that it is not only in western societies that slavery has been a stigmatised area for historical research. In Japan, also, both medieval and early-modern insular slavery have rarely been discussed in historical scholarship because of the 'uncivilised' nature with which the institution is viewed. Personal communication, my thanks to Dr Tom Nelson and Prof. Richard Sharpe. Wyatt, "Significance", pp. 344–345.

²⁵³ Wyatt, "Significance", p. 345.

²⁵⁴ The term 'masculine purchase' is used here to denote a system in which women are accumulated and exchanged by men as a means to express power and emphasise masculine hierarchy. In such a patriarchal system the guardianship of women's sexuality is of fundamental significance to a man's social standing and honour. See R.M. Karras, "Desire", p. 24.

this analysis a step further and establish that the slave/free dichotomy was fundamentally significant for defining conceptions of power and powerlessness in relation to normative gender identities within these societies. Chapter 4, 'Slavery and Sin', will discuss the way in which the ecclesiastical hierarchy was attempting to modify both warrior behaviour and systems of patriarchy within medieval English society and will then explore how this affected contemporary conceptions of slavery. It will be argued that the Norman Conquest acted as a significant catalyst for cultural change in this respect. Chapter 5, 'Slavery and Cultural Antipathy' will explore how these cultural changes gave rise to the establishment of an 'imperialistic' English identity. The twelfth-century English elite appear to have become imbued with a civilising ideology analogous, in many ways, to that of the nineteenth-century British imperialists. This imperialistic attitude was to generate intense cultural antipathy between the societies of medieval Britain and would result, ultimately, in militaristic domination and conquest. Slave-raiding activities were to be at the very heart of this cultural conflict. Finally, in 'The Enduring Legacy of Medieval Slavery' will suggest that if we take a gendered perspective then it becomes apparent that there has been a significant degree of continuity in this ancient institution from the medieval into the modern era.

It is impossible for historians to separate themselves from their own social and political milieu. This historian accepts that the views presented within this study are a product of his own scepticism regarding free-market rationales and sentiments concerning the progressive nature of Western civilisation. Indeed, I have readily acknowledged my concerns regarding historical interpretations motivated, either consciously or unconsciously, by nationalistic sentiments which seek to portray Britain's medieval past in a sanitised and rosy hue; as the clear antecedent to a stable and economically prosperous United Kingdom. Furthermore, whilst wholly sympathetic towards feminist perspectives which have sought to write women back into medieval history, I feel it is very important to recognise and confront the often brutal and exclusive nature of medieval patriarchal sensibilities. This is essential if we are to attempt, in any way, to write the slaves (the majority of whom were, in all probability, women) back into medieval history.

In this chapter I have attempted to illustrate that modern sensibilities have dramatically affected the historical discourse concerning medieval slavery. D.B. Davis has remarked that following the nineteenth century crusade against slavery, "Anglo-American historians, theologians and moral philosophers cited this abolition as proof of the divine purpose

of history, a purpose made manifest through human enlightenment.”²⁵⁵ Medieval historians have frequently sought to prove that slavery disappeared from the societies of Western Europe for very similar reasons. Yet, during the late twentieth century positivist attitudes regarding the progressive character of Western civilisation have been undermined or at least questioned within many academic disciplines. In spite of this, the powerful cultural antipathy towards slavery that is so intimately associated with nineteenth-century sentiments of progress remains with us. This antipathy has given rise to an anachronistic notion that because our ancestors held freedom dearly they would have had little to do with slavery or slave holding.²⁵⁶ However, we should not attempt to sanitise the medieval institution of slavery because this can only lead to complacency and misunderstanding.²⁵⁷ Slavery is certainly a culturally prolific phenomenon and it has taken many different forms in many different societies. Yet it has always been characterised by parasitic exploitation, psychological and sexual subjection and the naked power of physical violence. We should not be afraid to call slavery by its true name, even if this means modifying our perceptions of our freedom-loving ancestors.

²⁵⁵ Davis, “Slavery and ‘Progress’”, p. 352.

²⁵⁶ Patterson, *Social Death*, pp. vii–ix.

²⁵⁷ As D.B. Davis has argued “While we are the beneficiaries of genuine historical progress, we must guard against the “generational chauvinism” that assumes we are wiser or more virtuous than the European, African, and American creators of the highly complex Atlantic slave system.” D.B. Davis, “Broader Perspectives”, pp. 452–466, 455.

CHAPTER TWO

SLAVES AND WARRIORS

Warfare, Warriors and Slavery

In the Western European cultures of the early medieval period the enslavement of both men and women was a powerfully symbolic activity that was closely associated with warfare, sexual rapine and female abduction. Moreover, these activities were consistently attributed to one particular element of society; the male warrior fraternity. For medieval European societies one of the most significant initiation rituals involved the taking of arms by young adolescent males.¹ This symbolised the beginning of their military career and their transition into manhood. Following this initiation ritual young men were often culturally obligated to join or form into groups or fraternities and depart from their community into peripheral regions to follow a riotous lifestyle of violence and plunder.² The behaviour of such groups was significantly characterised by sexual violence and the abduction of women. Indeed, the existence of *raubehe* (the forced marriage of a young woman following her aggressive abduction by a male warrior) appears to have formed the foundation upon which Germanic conceptions of marriage were constructed.³ The Old English term for marriage, *brydhlöp*, which literally translated means 'bride running', would suggest that similar conceptions of marriage were extant within Anglo-Saxon society.⁴ Legal tracts from the 'Celtic' societies of medieval Britain appear to suggest that marital unions might also be instigated by rape and abduction within

¹ M. Mitterauer, *A History of Youth*, G. Dunphy (trans.) (Oxford/Cambridge, MA: B. Blackwell, 1992), pp. 50, 55.

² G. Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, C. Postan (trans.) (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), pp. 113–115 and J.F. Nagy, *The Wisdom of the Outlaw: The Boyhood Deeds of Finn in Gaelic Narrative Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) pp. 42–43.

³ J. Jochens, "Old Norse Sexuality: Men, Women and Beasts" in V.L. Bullough and J.A. Brundage (eds.), *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality* (New York: Garland, 1996) pp. 369–400, 370.

⁴ M. Clunies-Ross, "Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England", *P&P*, 108, 1985, pp. 3–34, 20–21. This matches the Old Norse cognate *bruthlaup* that has the same meaning.

these communities.⁵ Indeed, anthropological studies have revealed that such practices are common among many pre-industrial societies. Barbara Ayres has identified the practice of bride theft occurring in communities within Africa, East Eurasia, the Mediterranean, the Insular Pacific and in North and South America.⁶ The existence of this violent practice has traditionally been associated with societies in which there is a high level of competition for a scarce number of women. Yet, emotional, psychological and cultural factors also play a significant role in motivating such behaviour.⁷ Ayres remarks that female abduction is predominantly practised by youthful male warrior groups and most frequently occurs in those societies that classify men within definitive age groups and place a high value on military activity. Such activities are intimately associated with wider cultural conceptions regarding the acquisition and perpetuation of masculine identity and power.

Anthropological Approaches to the Youthful Warrior

A great deal of research has more recently been undertaken on the significance of warfare in relation to cultural constructions of both gender and ethno-centric identities. In an influential paper published in the early 1990's, Bruce Knaft has compared and contrasted patterns of violence and social behaviour in both primate groups, simple hunter gatherer societies and more complex pre-state or 'Middle Range' societies from a variety of different geographical contexts. In respect of the latter he has made some interesting observations which will be of relevance for this discussion. Knaft argues that in Middle Range

⁵ Bitel, *Land*, pp. 58–59, 63; N.T. Patterson, *Cattle Lords and Clansmen. The Social Structure of Early Ireland* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 215, 296. There has been some debate concerning the use of terms such as 'Celts' and 'Celtic' in reference to the medieval societies of Ireland, Scotland and Wales. I have, therefore, chosen to use these terms in inverted commas during the course of this study. They will be employed as a term of reference to denote the communities, which modern linguists refer to as 'P' Celtic and 'Q' Celtic speaking peoples. For a full debate see M. Chapman, *The Celts, The Construction of a Myth* (London: Macmillan, 1992).

⁶ B. Ayres, "Bride Theft and Raiding for Wives in Cross-cultural Perspective", *AQ*, 47, no. 3, July, 1974, pp. 238–252, 239–240. See also W.T. Divale and M. Harris, "Population, Warfare and the Male Supremacist Complex", *American Anthropologist*, 78, 3, September 1976, pp. 521–538, D.R. White and M.L. Burton, "Causes of Polygyny: Ecology, Economy, Kinship and Warfare", *American Anthropologist*, 90, 4, December 1988, pp. 871–887.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

societies violence and warfare are valued as a dimensions of masculinity and are closely related to fraternal interest groups, social boundedness and ethnic identity.⁸ He notes that vengeance killings and feuds are relatively common in such societies and highlights how violence is very often related to dominance over/access to a greater number of women: "Middle Range societies also tend toward a stronger ethic of competitive virility linked to positive valuation of male assertiveness and aggression in gender relations, politics and warfare."⁹ Knauft observes that these characteristics are socialised from an early age. The children in these societies are often grouped into age-graded same-sex cohorts which facilitate constructions of social hierarchy and act as a mechanism for developing strong warriors.¹⁰

In his comparative study "Explaining War" R. Brian Ferguson has drawn some very similar conclusions to Knauft.¹¹ He has observed that youthful aggressive males were often excluded from political and kindred decision making processes because "...the 'hotheads' may be young men, bachelors, who have less to lose and more to gain from combat than older family men".¹² He notes that in most societies there is often a strong association between war and ideas of magic, the supernatural and/or religious belief.¹³ Like Knauft, Brian Ferguson argues that in pre-industrial societies, the rules, values and attitudes of the warrior are instilled into boys from an early age.¹⁴ Indeed, individual military accomplishment may be a prerequisite for achieving adulthood; it is reinforced in adults through cultural labels of shame for cowards and prestige for accomplished warriors.¹⁵ In such societies military ideals and ethno-centrism overlap with economic motivations and one significant consequence of this is that "...slave taking is often a major goal of raiding and full scale war."¹⁶

In a recent summary of anthropological/sociological literature in this area the archaeologist Helle Vandekilde has observed how the warrior

⁸ B.M. Knauft, "Violence and Sociality in Human Evolution", *Current Anthropology*, vol. 32, 4, August–October 1991, pp. 391–428, 391.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 406.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 406.

¹¹ R. Brian Ferguson, "Explaining War" in J. Haas (ed.), *The Anthropology of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 26–55, 36.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

is often regarded as an ambivalent double being; exhibiting apparently opposite qualities such as chivalry and brutality, high esteem and cruelty. He argues that warrior fraternities often cut across or invalidate kindred ties and create fictive kinship bonds between the warriors within the group. Vandkilde identifies three generic processes by which access to the warrior institution is regulated, these are:

1. *Warrior Institutions Regulated through Age*

In which warriorhood is a phase in the life-cycle of all males therefore all young men must become warriors in order to progress from boyhood into adulthood. Warrior bands are therefore constituted of youthful unmarried men who have undergone initiation together. Such war bands are strictly age-graded and warriorhood marks the proudest period in a man's life cycle. It is signalled through displays of weaponry and specific hairstyles and/or dress. Such age-based war bands are extremely competitive and carry esteem, but they do not constitute an elite, nor are they necessarily attached to an elite. In such societies political influence is in the hands of older men who occupy the warrior bands with raids and cattle herding, keeping them away from settled community and women.¹⁷

2. *Warrior Institutions Regulated through Personal Qualities*

In which all males of the tribe belong to a war association at some point, but in which membership of a specific group can depend on personal qualities, usually ferocity and prowess in war. Therefore, successful war bands attract capable young warriors and such bands are characterised by mutual indebtedness, obligations and companionship.¹⁸ Such groups are not necessarily elitist by nature but nevertheless they can occur in quite heavily stratified and hierarchical societies (although they are more usual in societies without a rigid structure).¹⁹

¹⁷ H. Vandkilde, "Warriors and Warrior Institutions in Copper Age Europe" in T. Otto and H. Vandkilde (eds.), *Warfare and Society: Archaeological and Social Anthropological Perspectives* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2006), pp. 393–422, 399.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 399.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 399–400.

3. *Warrior Institutions Regulated through Status*

Where active warrior hood is a phase in the life-cycle of certain males who belong to the elite or who wish to gain access to that elite through successful warrior behaviour. Warrior members are therefore recruited, by and large, from the aristocracy and military organisation is monopolised by the elite who dominate through military sources of power. Warrior status is normally hereditary and war bands are stratified and hierarchical but, nevertheless, the classic egalitarian spirit of reciprocity and equality between leader and warrior companions is still an ideal to be followed.²⁰

Vankilde notes that these three forms of warrior regulation often intersect and overlap, as do the social identities of the individual warrior.²¹ We will see, as this discussion unfolds, that there are some very clear parallels to be drawn between his classifications of warrior groups and those found in the societies of medieval Britain and Ireland.

In many societies an individual's life cycle may be divided into a series of age-grades or stages through which that individual progresses with varying degrees of social status.²² Transitions between such stages are often marked by an initiation rite that may include a period of temporary separation from the community, during which the initiate might behave in a dangerous and violent manner.²³ Furthermore, the behaviour of such warrior initiates is characterised by their fundamental need "...to demonstrate daring, physical courage and sexual virility; hostility and defiance of adult male authority... (and)... hostility toward or contempt for women."²⁴ This hyper-aggressive masculine behaviour occurs primarily in adolescent males as a direct response to society's demand that they assertively display their masculinity and assume dominant status.²⁵ The transition from the feminine world of the infant to the masculine world of the adult is, thereby, completed through the

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 400–401.

²¹ Ibid., p. 399.

²² A. Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, M.B. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee (trans.) (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960), p. 83.

²³ Ibid., p. 83 and M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London/New York: Routledge, 1966, repr. 2002), pp. 95–97.

²⁴ Ayres, "Bride", p. 246.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 246.

practise of initiation ceremonies, criminal and delinquent behaviour and female abduction.²⁶

The purpose of this discussion will be to examine the cultural significance of such groups and their activities within the societies of medieval Britain. The intention is to reveal how ritualised violence and conceptions of patriarchal power contributed towards the configuration of both gender identities and social hierarchy within these societies. It will be illustrated that slavery was an institution that was of fundamental significance for these processes and for the maintenance of the cultural identities of these British communities. We will begin by analysing the institution of the warrior fraternity within the societies of medieval Britain.²⁷ It will be argued that these fraternities constituted a cultural mechanism for controlling the dangerous behaviour of transitional individuals who were not yet a part of the established masculine hierarchy. The close association between the warrior fraternity, violent rapine and female abduction will then be examined and related to wider slave raiding activities, which, it will be argued, were deliberately undertaken as a means to express both virility and power. A discussion of the significance of traditional patriarchal systems will follow. This will reveal that a close relationship existed between systems of marriage, concubinage and the accumulation of female slaves within these societies. This, in turn, will illustrate that highly institutionalised notions of sexual jealousy existed within these British communities which were intimately connected to contemporary conceptions concerning power and masculine identity. Finally, we shall examine how the institution of slavery provided the foundation upon which this traditional patriarchal order was built. Indeed, it will be revealed that slavery was an institution of fundamental significance within these British communities, not only, for the maintenance of social order but, also, for the constructions of power and gender.

In his seminal anthropological study *The Rites of Passage* Arnold Van Gennep has analysed initiation rites from diverse cultures across the

²⁶ Ibid., p. 246.

²⁷ The evidence from Ireland will take precedence, here, as a significant amount of work has been done on such groups in Old Irish society by academics such as Nagy, Sharpe and McCone. This material provides the methodological base for my analysis of similar groups in the other communities of medieval Britain. It should be noted at this point that due to time restrictions the author has been unable to master the Old Irish language. Translations from English editions of the Old Irish texts have therefore been used in this thesis except where the parallel Old Irish version is readily discernable.

globe including the indigenous peoples of North America, Africa and Asia. He has noted that many pre-industrial societies have age-group systems through which advancement is determined by prowess in war or raiding.²⁸ Van Gennep has identified that rites of separation and re-incorporation were culturally prolific during transitional stages, especially during the transition from boyhood into manhood.²⁹ The warrior initiate would be separated from society and the world of women, he would be transported into the wilderness and join an all male fraternity that would be subjected to various physical tests. During this separation the initiate may behave in a mentally unstable manner, he would be expected to contradict social norms and be considered dangerous by those who remained within the community. The initiate may have to remain naked and would be closely associated with the animal world. In addition, initiate groups would be likely to steal and pillage from their own or other communities, they would be permitted sexual license and would often be renamed during the transitional period. Finally, their re-incorporation into the community and their new adult status would often be symbolised by bathing.³⁰

Many scholars have directly and indirectly endorsed Van Gennep's model of ritual separation and re-incorporation. In her study *Purity and Danger* Mary Douglas noted that, in many cultures, transitional periods in the life cycle are viewed as dangerous to the community and must be controlled by ritual. She has argued that adolescent males are often placed in the margins of society for a period of 'ritual death' before they may be 'reborn' into the community. During this marginal period the initiates "are licensed to waylay steal and rape."³¹ Similarly, Mitterauer has argued that youth groups with cultic functions were essential institutions for the transitional phase into male adulthood in medieval Europe.³² Moreover, Duby has commented on the significance of 'youthful' male fraternities in eleventh and twelfth-century France who lived a life of "turbulence, instability" and organised "vagabondage" before being admitted into the settled society of marriage and inheritance.³³

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 87–88.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 82.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 65–116.

³¹ Douglas, *Purity*, pp. 95–97.

³² Mitterauer, *Youth*, pp. 151–155.

³³ Duby, *Chivalrous*, pp. 112–115. Warren Hollister has argued that the twelfth-century English king Henry I experienced such a lifestyle during his youth, see *Henry I* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 40–45.

Dumezil has argued for the importance of animal symbolism to such all-male societies noting that warriors, such as the Norse *berserkr*, were associated with the attributes of wolves and bears and with shamanic shape-changing capabilities.³⁴ But what evidence is there for the existence of such fraternities in the societies of medieval Britain?

Warfare and Masculinity in Medieval Ireland: The Fian

The importance of the transitional process from youthful, male adolescent into warrior-champion is readily apparent in the myths and sagas of medieval Irish society. In the *Fenian* literature, which became popular in Ireland from the tenth century onwards, we are clearly able to discern an initiate warrior fraternity represented in the institution of the *fian*. The hero of this literature was Finn a mythical champion and poet, who lived outside society in the wilderness and led his *fian* band in adventures and feats of prowess in this world and in the supernatural world. The *Fenian* cycle dwelt upon the theme of transition to warrior adulthood and its action occurred in marginal locations in the wilderness. Its characters were youthful men often with animalistic or supernatural qualities and their motivations were primarily fighting and hunting.³⁵ Finn was portrayed not only as a warrior but also as a *filid*, a knowledgeable poet who acted as a tutor and educated the youths of the *fian* in the martial and social skills that they would need in later adult life.³⁶ Yet, does this fictional material provide any basis for the existence of the *fian* in reality?

Eminent scholars of Irish history and literature, such as Binchy and Myles Dillon, have argued that the early medieval Irish literature provides us with a conservative reflection of the pre-Christian past.³⁷ They feel that the corpus of this literature was compiled from orally

³⁴ G. Dumézil, *The Destiny of the Warrior* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 140–143. See also H.E. Davidson, “The Training of Warriors” in S.C. Hawkes (ed.), *Weapons and Warfare in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1989), pp. 11–21 and J. Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, A. Goldhammer (trans.) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 178.

³⁵ J.F. Nagy, “Fenian Heroes and their Rites of Passage” in B. Almqvist et al. (eds.), *The Heroic Process: Form, Function and Fantasy in Folk Epic* (Dublin: Glendale Press, 1987), pp. 162–164.

³⁶ Nagy, *Wisdom*, p. 68 and Nagy, “Fenian”, p. 167.

³⁷ K. McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature* (Maynooth: An Sagart, 1990), p. 2.

transmitted mythologies and therefore provides us with a window through which we can catch a glimpse of Iron-age pagan society.³⁸ However, in his study *Pagan Past and Christian Present* Kim McCone has convincingly refuted this assumption. McCone accepts that the authors of this material were drawing on pagan/oral traditions, but argues that monastically educated *literati*, operating within a Christian milieu, had composed the material.³⁹ McCone points out that the *literati* did not objectively record a bygone cultural age. Indeed, the oral traditions themselves had mutated and adapted to changes in society and culture. The early medieval Irish *literati* would not have transcribed the sagas unless they had been directly relevant to their own social era.⁴⁰ Moreover, if the *fian* were a merely a literary construct then why did certain medieval Irish Christian writers go to so much trouble to express their antipathy towards this institution?⁴¹ The staunch ecclesiastical antipathy towards such warrior bands may be less surprising when we consider that many early Irish churches would have been situated in boundary or wilderness locations. These were precisely the same locations in which the *fian* were traditionally supposed to have operated.⁴² By the eighth century, the Latin term *laicus* came to acquire a condemnatory meaning of ‘brigand’ in Irish ecclesiastical texts. Thereafter, it became synonymous with itinerant *fian* bands of warriors and the practise of *díberg* or brigandage.⁴³ In Old Irish *díberg* is associated with pagan ritual violence, the wearing of diabolical marks and evil behaviour.⁴⁴ As a conservative warrior fraternity it seems probable that the *fian* would have preserved certain traits of traditional pagan culture encapsulated by this practise. The Middle Irish tale *Immram curaig Úa Corra* comments that *fian* brigands were consecrated to the devil which provided them

³⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 1–27.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 219. The seventh-century vernacular text *Aipgitir Chrabaid* (The alphabet of piety) condemned the *fian* lifestyle stating that it created many problems for Christian men “i.e. it contracts territories, it increases hostility, it destroys life, it prolongs torments.” Ibid., p. 219.

⁴² P. Ó Riain, “Boundary Association in Early Irish Society”, *Studia Celtica*, 7, 1972, pp. 12–29, 19.

⁴³ R. Sharpe, “Hiberno-Latin *Laicus*, Irish *Laech* and the devil’s men”, *Eriu*, 30, 1979, pp. 75–92 at pp. 80–83.

⁴⁴ Sharpe, “*Laicus*”, p. 83.

with a license to kill clerics, raze churches and commit acts of *diberg*.⁴⁵ The *Annals of Ulster* confirm the existence of *fian* groups practising *diberg* in the mid ninth century noting in 847

...the sack of the island of Loch Muinreair by Mael Sechnaill against a large *fian*-host of the sons of death of the Luigni and Gailenga who had been overrunning the kingdoms in the manner of pagans.⁴⁶

This entry suggests that *fian* groups were a very real and very dangerous phenomenon. Indeed, the *Annals*' reference to the "sons of death" ravaging "in the manner of pagans" was more than just a comparison with contemporary Norse raiders. The annalist was clearly aware of the pagan associations and ritualistic nature of such groups within his own society.

We should not be surprised that we learn more about the institution of the *fian* from literary writings and poetry than from the historical narratives and annals. Warrior fraternities living outside society have captured the folklore imagination of many cultures. Yet, the actions of such groups are rarely intentionally political and as a result they are less likely to leave a mark on the historical record.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, scholars who have studied the *Fenian cycle* in depth appear to be in little doubt that the institution of the *fian* had a firm basis in reality.⁴⁸ The continuing presence of such *fian* groups may help to explain the enduring relevance and popularity of the Fenian tales.⁴⁹ The Irish law tract *Tecosca Cormaic* clearly attests to the existence of the *fian* in a dictum that states: "everyman is a *fian* member until (he acquires) landed property."⁵⁰ This appears to parallel the generic warrior group classifications proposed by

⁴⁵ *Immram curaig Úa Corra*, A.G. van Hamel (ed.), *Immrama* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1941), pp. 94–111. See also M. West, "Aspects of *diberg* in the tale *Togail bruidne Da derga*", *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 49, 1997, pp. 950–964, 952.

⁴⁶ McCone's translation is used here see *Pagan Past*, p. 219. The editors of the *Annals of Ulster* give the translation of "*fian-lach mar di macraib bais*" as "a large band of wicked men" see *AU*, p. 219.

⁴⁷ M. Keen, *The Outlaws of Medieval Legend* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1961), pp. 191–193.

⁴⁸ M. Sjoestedt, *Gods and Heroes of the Celts* (London: Methuen, 1949), pp. 81–91, McCone, *Pagan Past*, p. 219, Nagy, *Wisdom*, pp. 1–16, Sharpe, "*Laicus*", pp. 75–92, 90.

⁴⁹ Nagy, *Wisdom*, p. 13.

⁵⁰ "...*fénid cách co trebad*...", *Tecosca Cormaic*, *The Instructions of King Cormac Mac Airt*, K. Meyer (ed. and trans.), *Royal Irish Academy, Todd Lecture Series*, vol. xv (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, 1909), para. 31, line 10, p. 47, translation taken from McCone, *Pagan Past*, p. 205. The codes are ascribed to the legendary king of Tara, Cormac Mac Airt. They were most probably written by Irish monks during the ninth century.

Vandekilde and suggests a very wide membership indeed. *Tecosca Cormaic* therefore supports the idea that *fian* members were landless, itinerant warriors in a transitional state between childhood and marriage and inheritance. A period of membership within the *fian* appears to have been essential for the education of noble and royal sons.⁵¹ Yet, the *fian* was not exclusively an institution for adolescent initiates. It provided a place for those individuals in society who had fallen from grace, been outlawed, or for any man whose status was undergoing a transition.⁵² In this way peripheral and potentially dangerous individuals found a niche in the *fian* and this helped to limit their potentially disruptive effect upon society. Interestingly, *fian* membership appears to have been open to all levels of Irish society and this too provides a striking parallel with anthropological studies that indicate the egalitarian nature of warrior fraternities. These groups accommodated the need for potential leaders to experience a lowly position. As Turner has put it: "...the high could not be high unless the low existed, and he who is high must experience what it is like to be low."⁵³ Such initiate groups, thereby, reinforced the hierarchy and structure of the community. That is not to suggest that the *fian* did not have a hierarchy of its own. Some members would have had to wait longer than others for their inheritance and, therefore, remained in this transitional state of 'youth' for many years.⁵⁴ The same would have applied to older 'outcasts' who had entered the *fian* through loss of status.⁵⁵ These senior members would have sought to educate the younger initiates in social and martial matters just as Finn did in the *Fenian Cycle*.⁵⁶

Fian warriors were potentially dangerous to the settled community and so they spent much of their time in the wilderness forming microcosmic

⁵¹ McCone, *Pagan Past*, p. 209. For example, the *Vita Sancti Lugidii* (*The Life of St. Lugaid*) tells of a king's son named *Faelan* (little wolf) who had adventures with a brigand band before becoming a King himself. This tale is extant in a fourteenth-century manuscript but was almost certainly a redaction of an earlier medieval saint's life, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae ex Codice olim Salamanticensi nunc Bruxellensi*, W.W. Heist (ed.) (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1965), para. 10, p. 133.

⁵² Nagy, *Wisdom*, pp. 20–21.

⁵³ V.W. Turner, *The Ritual Process; Structure and Antistructure* (Chicago/Aldine/London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 82–83.

⁵⁴ West, "Díberg", p. 954.

⁵⁵ K. McCone, "Werewolves, Cyclopes, Díberga, and Fianna: Juvenile Delinquency in Early Ireland", *CMCS*, 12, 1986, pp. 1–23, 11. See also Davidson, "Training", pp. 11–12.

⁵⁶ Nagy, *Wisdom*, pp. 64–65.

societies with their own hierarchy and moral codes.⁵⁷ This wilderness location was thought to place them in close proximity to supernatural forces, which provided them with knowledge and super-human capabilities.⁵⁸ A dishevelled or naked appearance was a common motif for such groups and re-emphasised lack of concern for social appearance and status and a close affiliation with nature.⁵⁹ This affiliation often manifested itself in representations of warriors with canine attributes.⁶⁰ For example, the legendary youthful Irish hero Chú Chulainn (little hound) was said to have fought with the ferocity of a beast.⁶¹ Such animal symbolism was often closely associated with virility and physical power in the Old Irish texts. Following his inaugural raid Chú Chulainn was said to have been so swollen with rage that he became a danger to his own people. This dangerous state was only brought under control when one hundred and fifty naked women were sent to immerse the raging hero in three vats of cooling water. The nakedness of these numerous females would appear to symbolise the warrior's newly acquired rights of sexual access and female accumulation.⁶² Stories such as this reveal

⁵⁷ Nagy, *Wisdom*, p. 21.

⁵⁸ Sjoestedt, *Gods and Heroes*, p. 103, Nagy, *Wisdom*, p. 31. Le Goff has noted that similar motifs are common in continental Latin literature during the medieval period see *Imagination*, pp. 108–110, 114–118.

⁵⁹ P. Ó Riain, “A Study of the Irish Legend of Wild Men”, *Eigse*, vol. xiv, 1971–2, pp. 179–206, 200–201, 205.

⁶⁰ McCone, “Werewolves”, also K. McCone, “Aided Cheltchair maic Uthechair: Hounds, Heroes and Hospitallers in Early Irish Myth and Story”, *Ériu*, 35, 1984, pp. 1–30.

⁶¹ Indeed, Chú Chulainn acquired his canine name after he had slain a terrifying hound, *Táin Bó Cúalnge*, C.O. Rahilly (ed. and trans.) (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1970), pp. 162–163. The *Táin* reveals that the hero Chú Chulainn underwent a transitional phase and a ritual separation from his community before his re-incorporation as a warrior. However, he undertakes this transitional period in isolation and without entering into a male fraternity. The earliest recension of the *Táin* is a conflation of two ninth-century versions extant in a manuscript from around 1100. Nevertheless, the tale was almost certainly composed at an earlier date, probably during the eighth century. Indeed, its archaic nature is betrayed by representations of heroic chariot warfare and rigid tribal affiliations. Such affiliations may have influenced the nature of the initiation process or merely affected how it was portrayed. The *Fenian* literature has much in common with the *Táin* but portrays a very different world in which warfare is fought on foot or on horseback and in which the hero remained external to the ‘tribe’. These tales appear to have become far more popular than the *Táin* from the tenth century onwards and their lack of rigid ‘tribal’ associations reflects their differing social and political milieu.

⁶² The author of the *Táin* described the violent distortion of Cú Chulainn's physique in greater detail in a later chapter using fairly explicit sexual imagery. “He performed a wild feat of contortion with his body inside his skin... As high, as thick, as strong, as

how closely violence and sexual aggression were linked in the early medieval psyche. Warriors were frequently conceived of as wolves; as hunters for whom both animals and humans were legitimate prey.⁶³ Medieval Irish literary evidence associates the practice of *díberg* with lycanthropic capabilities. A passage from *Cóir Anmann*, relates that the warrior Laignech Fáelad mutated into a wolf shape and went wolfing.⁶⁴ Such shape-shifting activities may have been instigated by the donning of wolf skins as part of a ritual transformation, or perhaps associated with the wearing of a distinctive lupine hairstyle.⁶⁵ *Fíán* members may also have howled like wolves before battle and entered into a frenzied state of violence akin to the Old Norse *berserkr*, who will be discussed later in this chapter.⁶⁶ In the tale *Togaile Bruidne Da Derga* (the destruction of Da Derga's hostel) we are told that prior to conducting *díberg* on the hostel the warriors "raised a war howl around it".⁶⁷ A panel from the ninth-century Market Cross at Kells depicts a horned figure, with a distinctive moustache and braided beard flanked by two wolves standing upright upon their hind legs (fig 3.). Ross has interpreted this carving as an anachroistic image of a pagan deity "...symbolic perhaps of Satan or Anti-Christ, rather than representing an overt

powerful and as long as a mast of a great ship was the straight stream of dark blood which rose up from the very top of his head and became a dark magical mist..." see *TBC*, pp. 170–171, 201.

⁶³ For a discussion of Indo European warrior traditions in relation to lycanthropic cults and rituals see T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanov, *Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans*, J. Nichols (trans.) (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1995), pp. 413–17, 414.

⁶⁴ The tract also notes that his children slaughtered cattle in the manner of wolves, *Cóir Anmann* (*Fitness of Names*), in W. Stokes and E. Windisch (eds.), *Irish Texts* III, Part 2 (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1887), pp. 376–77. This is a late Middle Irish tract which explains the origins and names of various characters in early literature, it dates originally from the late twelfth century but its contents were clearly based upon much earlier traditions, see S. Arbuthnot, "The Manuscript Tradition of *Cóir Anmann*", *Studia Celtica*, xxxv, 2001, pp. 285–298. For further evidence concerning werewolves in Irish literature see J.R. Reinhard and V.E. Hull, "Bran and Sceolang", *Speculum*, 11, 1936, pp. 42–58, see also West, "Díberg", p. 955.

⁶⁵ West, "Díberg", p. 957.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ "*fo-carthar a ndord n-impit*", This may be an example of the *dord fian*; the chant which the *fian* were said to utter before going into battle. West suggests that this chant may have involved such warriors howling like wolves, indeed, she highlights a number of significant motifs in *TBDD* which associate warriors practicing *díberg* with wolves and wolf-like activities "Díberg", pp. 957, 961–962. See *Togaile Bruidne Da Derga*, E. Knott (ed.) (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1936), line, 1398, p. 42. This saga appears to have been compiled in the eleventh century from two ninth-century versions.



Figure 3. Panel from the north shaft of the ninth-century Market Cross at Kells depicting a horned figure flanked by two wolves, reproduced by kind permission of Anthony Wier.

effort to perpetuate a still potent cult.”⁶⁸ However, Ross may have underestimated the resilience and symbolic power of traditional warrior cults for medieval Irish society. The depiction provides a graphic parallel for the numerous associations of warriors as wolves which continue to characterise the Irish literature throughout the medieval period.⁶⁹ Given the ninth-century date of the cross, it may also provide a physical reflection of the concerns expressed by the contemporary chronicler of the *Annals of Ulster*, cited above, regarding the “*fian*-host of the sons of death” who were said to be “overrunning the kingdoms in the manner of pagans”. The wolf/hound was, therefore, a “symbol of warrior values *par excellence*”. It betokened ferocity, frenzied behaviour, animal strength, protection, sexual attraction and martial prowess in a similar manner to the ursine symbolism of the Norse *berserkr*.⁷⁰ Such warrior/canine associations are culturally prolific especially in Indo-European mythology and are symbolic of the unpredictable nature of the young warrior who can alternate from protective benevolence to destructive malevolence.⁷¹

In many cultures initiates of warrior fraternities were expected, almost obligated, to contravene the social order of their communities and the *fian* appear to have been no exception.⁷² Muirchú, the seventh-century biographer of St. Patrick related that a savage pagan Ulsterman named Macuil Moccu Greccae was

...residing in a mountainous, rough and high place in Druim Moccu Échach, where this bandit daily exercised his harsh rule, wearing emblems of the most wicked cruelty and cruelly killing wayfarers as they passed by...⁷³

⁶⁸ A. Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), pp. 143–144. See also P. Harbison, *Irish High Crosses* (Bonn: Habelt, 1992), pp. 68–69.

⁶⁹ West, “Díberg”, pp. 963–964.

⁷⁰ McCone, “Aided Cheltchair”, p. 13.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁷² Douglas, *Purity*, p. 96 and Van Gennep, *Rites*, pp. 114–115.

⁷³ “...in tantum uergens impietatis in profundum ita ut die quadam in montoso aspero altoque sedens loco hi nDruim moccu Echach, ubi ille tyrannidem cotidie exercebat signa sumens nequissima crudelitatis et transeuntes hospites crudely scelere interficiens...”, *Vita Patricii, The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*, L. Bieler (ed. and trans.) (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1979), pp. 102–103. This hagiographical tale was probably first written down during the eighth century. See L. Abrams, “Muirchú’s Life of St. Patrick in the ‘Book of Armagh’” in D.N. Dumville (ed.), *Saint Patrick AD 493–1993* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1993), pp. 203–219.

Similarly, the author of the eighth-century hagiographical tale *Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae* (First Life of St. Brigit) remarked that certain youthful warriors would wear diabolical amulets in order to symbolise that they had taken an oath to kill someone.⁷⁴ In the slightly later tale *Togaile Bruidne Da Derga* three brothers operating in a *fian* band complained when they were restricted from practising “theft, plunder and slaughter of people and *diberg*.”⁷⁵ This emphasis on the warrior’s right to plunder strongly suggests that the *fian* would have been heavily involved in slave-taking activities.

Membership of warrior fraternities was rarely an automatic right, it had to be earned through initiation rites and the *fian* was no exception. The twelfth-century text *Áirem muintiri Finn* (the enumeration of Finn’s people) lists the initiation tests that had to be performed by an individual wishing to enter the *fian*. These included dodging the spears of nine warriors, avoiding injury whilst being hunted by other *fian* members in the forest (an inversion of the hunter/hunted situation which placed the initiate in an slave-like position), and the wearing of braided hair (an embodiment of the devil’s mark condemned in the *Vita Patricii* and *Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae* and evident on the Market Cross at Kells).⁷⁶

⁷⁴ “*Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae*”, S. Connolly (ed. and trans.), *JRSAL*, 119, 1989, pp. 5–49. Tradition has it that Brigit was a contemporary of St. Patrick who lived during the late fifth/early sixth centuries. There are three early medieval lives of Brigit dating to around the turn of the ninth century. Sharpe has argued that all three were based directly or indirectly on an earlier, now missing, ‘primitive’ *Vita* composed during the seventh or eighth centuries. He feels that the *Vita Prima* provides the template for the second life (*Vita II*) whilst an Old Irish version entitled *Bethu Brigte* was based directly on the earlier ‘primitive’ life. The *Vita Prima* is extremely significant as it influenced the composition of hagiographical texts all over Europe. It is preserved in at least twenty five manuscripts across the continent. Sharpe has, therefore, argued that in the context of Hiberno-Latin saints’ lives the *Vita Prima*, more than any other text, “is a paradigm of the genre.” See R. Sharpe, “*Vitae Brigitae*: The Oldest Texts”, *Peritia*, 1, 1982, pp. 81–106, 82. Similarly, Bartlett has highlighted the importance of Brigit’s cult in England where it had twice the number of dedications than the cult of St. Patrick, see R. Bartlett, “Cults of Irish, Scottish and Welsh Saints in Twelfth Century England” in B. Smith (ed.), *Britain and Ireland 900–1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 67–86, 75. Furthermore, the tale is particularly useful to this study because both Brigit and her mother were said to have been slaves. The *Vita Prima* is, therefore, an important source for incidental information concerning domestic slavery in early Ireland and also concerning the nature of the master’s relationship with his female slaves. The continuing popularity of the tale suggests that the issues it presented continued to have relevance for the societies of medieval Europe.

⁷⁵ ‘*gat 7 brat 7 guin daine 7 diberg*’, *TBDD*, lines 192–194, p. 6 translation taken from McCone, *Pagan Past*, p. 206 see also West, “*Diberg*”, pp. 950–964.

⁷⁶ *Áirem muintiri Finn, The Enumeration of Finn’s People, Silva Gadelica: A Collection of Irish Tales*, 2 vols. S. O’Grady (ed. and trans.) (London: Williams and Norgate, 1892) vol. i,

Even more significantly, it would seem that following their acceptance into the *fian* initiates would be symbolically and legally separated from their kin group and community. The *Áirem muintiri Finn* remarks that the initiate's kindreds had to have

...given securities for them to the effect that, though at the present instant they were slain, yet should no claim be urged in lieu of them... On the other hand: in case it were they that inflicted great mischiefs upon others, reprisals not to be made upon their several people.⁷⁷

This placed the *fian* member firmly outside the jurisdiction of the community; in effect he had no status, rights or kin group. His transitional status, thereby, placed him in a position of 'ritual death' that was analogous in many ways with the 'social death' experienced by the slave.⁷⁸ Indeed, these two marginal groups were often closely associated within the Fenian literature. The warrior initiate's marginal position and official lack of status and rights was, therefore, closely paralleled by the lowly status of the slave. Furthermore, the communities of the medieval Britain and Ireland appear to have regarded these two groups in a similar manner. Both were deemed an essential element of the social fabric whilst paradoxically posing a dramatic internal threat to social order. To both these segments of society were attributed dangerous supernatural knowledge and paganistic associations.⁷⁹ Moreover, as

pp. 92–93, translated in vol. ii, pp. 99–100. For the dating of this text see *Fiannaigecht*, K. Meyer (ed.), *Todd Lecture Series*, vol. xvi (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, 1910), p. xxx. For anthropological parallels see Van Gennep, *Rites*, pp. 74–87.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ For a full analysis of the social death experienced by the slave see Patterson, *Social Death*, pp. 38–51.

⁷⁹ The symbolic image of the slave as a marginal person, an outsider or alien against which society was defined is evident from the role of the slave in the eighth-century Old English poem *Beowulf*. This poem is found in a single late tenth-century manuscript, yet it was almost certainly composed several centuries before. In its final stages the poem tells how a beaten runaway slave steals the treasure of a sleeping dragon. The dragon subsequently awakens and unleashes his wrath on Beowulf's people. The poet depicts the slave as a non-person who lived on the margins that separated social order from chaos. Indeed, only he and the warrior are able to bridge the abyss between reality and the supernatural, *Beowulf*, M. Swanton (ed. and trans.) (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978), lines 2279–2287, p. 94. This association between slaves and the supernatural underworld is also evident in late seventh-century *Laws of Wigtred* that issue harsh punishments for slaves found making offerings to devils, *Wigtred*, 13, *Die Gesetze*, p. 13. The association of warrior initiates and other marginal groups (including slaves) with supernatural powers in Irish and Welsh medieval literature has been examined in J.F. Nagy, "Liminality and Knowledge in Irish Tradition", *Studia Celtica*, 16–17, 1981–1982, pp. 135–144; P.N. Cathain, "Swineherds, Seers and Druids", *Studia*

warrior groups often formed their own societies in wilderness locations they may have sought to define these societies against the only group that were more marginal than themselves i.e. slaves.⁸⁰ Unlike the slave; however, the *fian* member had total freedom from all social restraints and norms. He may have no longer received the protection of his kin group or community but, paradoxically, his wayward and violent actions could no longer affect them or involve them in vengeance procedures or feud. In a sense, then, he had free license to kill, rape and enslave.⁸¹

Although *fian* members were separated from their kin group and community they continued to receive some recognition in the early Irish law tracts. The eighth-century legal tract *Senchas Már* stated that the *fian* member should be able to commit “permissible acts of plundering” (“*foglu dilsí don*”).⁸² Furthermore, codes extant in the Old Irish legal tract *Críth Gablach* clearly associated such individuals with slave taking activities. One code noted that a *fian* champion must be: “a man who takes a man alive in capture and holds him in battle... a man who runs through a prisoner without compunction.”⁸³ Another Old Irish legal miscellany notes that a *fergíne* (warrior champion) is a man for whom there are “proper manly deeds” (“*fer-ghníma*”). These deeds included facing seven combats during which the *fergíne* must: “capture a man through his prowess from every one of those combats until he has the seven man takings.”⁸⁴

In spite of the unstable and anti-authoritarian nature of the *fian* it appears that they were often employed by kings or used as a mercenary force by nobles.⁸⁵ Even the mythical Finn was portrayed serving certain

Celtica, 14–15, 1979–1980, pp. 200–211, and O’Riain, “A Study of the Irish Legend of the Wild Men”, pp. 179–207.

⁸⁰ For warrior wilderness communities in Ireland see Nagy, *Wisdom*, p. 21.

⁸¹ Nagy, *Wisdom*, p. 20 and Sjoestedt, *Gods and Heroes*, pp. 99–110.

⁸² Nagy, *Wisdom*, p. 45.

⁸³ “*Fer fororggaib forgab fora chomlonn co tregda in fer tria sciath; fer gaibes fer béogabáil 7 aridn-gaib i roí; fer benas dam óenbéimmim nád fuidle[a]; fer forgaib cimbid cen aurlúid; ferforgaib éclann ar bélaib slúiaig co tuit di óenforggub.*” *Críth Gablach*, D.A. Binchy (ed.) (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1941), para. 43, p. 22. The significance of such activities for expressions of masculine prowess had very ancient roots in Europe. Scenes which depict ‘phallic’ warriors with erect penises brandishing weapons over bound captives are evident in both Bronze-Age and early Iron-Age continental rock art, see L. Bevan, “Warfare, Violence and the Construction of Masculinity in the Iron Age Rock Art of Valcamonica, Northern Italy” in Parker Pearson and Thorpe, *Warfare, Violence and Slavery*, pp. 127–137.

⁸⁴ “... 7 is ed is fergíne and i rosamaighed .i.iii. comlaind otha comland deisi goraighi comland morseisir, geibidh fer tara gaisged o gach comland dib go mbid na .i.iii. fergabalasin lais...”, *CIH*, 973.13–17.

⁸⁵ Nagy, *Wisdom*, p. 42.

Irish kings and this is perhaps unsurprising given that many royal youths were said to receive their military training within the *fian*. Indeed, it appears that they acted as a kind of quasi-militia enforcing their own form of rough justice.⁸⁶ Such a phenomenon is not unusual as, within many politically fragmented societies, those individuals who hold power often sanction the activities of the warrior fraternity.⁸⁷ Such groups are frequently regarded with fear and respect by their own people and are considered essential for protecting and maintaining the cultural identity of the community.⁸⁸ Sjoestedt argued that this was certainly the case in early Irish society; she remarked that the *fian* "...are not merely tolerated but, they are counted among the institutions necessary for the prosperity of the tribe provided they are 'without excess'".⁸⁹

Yet, the *fian* was, by nature, given to martial excess. It was largely independent of society and often preyed upon it.⁹⁰ This is made very clear in *Tógail Bruidne Da Derga*, mentioned briefly above. Thurneysen has proposed an original ninth-century date for this tale which would place it firmly within the context of more tangible annalistic accounts of *fian* ravages and the apparent depictions of *fian* warriors evident on the ninth-century Market Cross at Kells.⁹¹ The tale centres on the death of the mythical king of Tara, Conaire son of Mess Búachalla, at the hands of a great marauding *fian* band. Conaire was raised in fosterage with three sons of the *fian*-champion/warrior Donn Désa. Later, Conaire assumed the role of high-king of Ireland whilst his foster brothers followed in their father's footsteps and entered into the *fian*. However, tensions soon arose when king Conaire outlawed *díberg* thus presiding over a peaceful realm in which his foster brothers were forbidden from pursuing their ritual rite of brigandage.⁹² The sons of Donn Désa therefore sought to reassert their right to practise their skills of plunder and murder.⁹³ Summoning the noble youths of Ireland to

⁸⁶ McCone, *Pagan Past*, p. 212 and Patterson, *Cattle Lords*, pp. 225, 350.

⁸⁷ L. Tiger, *Men in Groups* (New York: M Boyars, 1984), p. 136.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Sjoestedt, *Gods and Heroes*, p. 102.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 102 and Nagy, *Wisdom*, p. 43.

⁹¹ R. Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- und Königsage bis zum 17. Jahrhundert* (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1921), pp. 25–26, 621–652 and West, "Díberg", pp. 963–964.

⁹² *TBDD*, lines 192–194, p. 6, West, "Díberg", pp. 951–964.

⁹³ Interestingly the author of the Welsh panygeric *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan* provides a similar instance in the context of eleventh-century Gwynedd. The author relates how during an attempt to gain control over Anglesey, early in his career, Gruffudd's Viking supporters "were angered, because they were not getting what they were accustomed

join their cause, they formed into a substantial war band of one hundred and fifty individuals.⁹⁴ Once assembled, the author relates that this band went “wolfing” (*fáelad*) in the territory of the Connacht; an action which provoked Conaire into banishing his foster-kin along with the other youthful warrior brigands of Ireland, sending them away to prey on the shores on Britain instead.⁹⁵ Whilst there, the exiled *fian* members soon allied themselves with a like-minded band of British counterparts under the leadership of Ingcél Cáech. The two groups then swore a solemn oath that they would carry out reciprocal *díberg*, pledging to conduct a lucrative and violent raid on each other’s respective communities.⁹⁶ Ingcél’s choice regarding the British leg of these raids was both brutal and disturbing. At his own instigation the combined forces preyed upon Ingcél’s kindred; his entire family including his father, mother and brothers were wiped out along with the king of his territory.⁹⁷ Following this the two warrior bands returned to Ireland, at which point Ingcél chose to raid the hostel of Da Derga where king Conaire has been forced to spend the night. The sons of Donn Désa initially protested at this, arguing that they would be forced to kill their own foster brother. However, Ingcél soon reminded them of their solemn oath of violence and they were obliged to continue with the raid. The combined forces, together with the other sons of the lords and kings of Ireland, then fell upon the hostel and Conaire was slain

to, as had been promised them. And through plunder they took most of Anglesey by force from him, and returned to their land with their ships full of men and riches, and took him also with them, but against his will.” *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan, The History of Gruffudd ap Cynan*, D. Simon Evans (ed. and trans.) (Llanerch: Llanerch Enterprises, 1990), pp. 34, 65. See also *Vita Griffini Filii Conani: The Medieval Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan*, P. Russell (ed. and trans.) (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), p. 67. For a full discussion of this text see note 305 below.

⁹⁴ *TBDD*, lines 374–402, p. 12, West, “Díberg”, p. 953.

⁹⁵ *TBDD*, line 206, p. 7.

⁹⁶ The text uses the phrase “*orgain fon orgain*” “a raid for a raid”, *TBDD*, line 437, p. 13. West has noted that “the noun *orgun* ‘attack, raid’ is verbal noun to the verb *oirgid* ‘murder, kill’, so that ruthless murder and wholesale massacre is implicit in the term”, see West, “Díberg”, p. 959, note 37.

⁹⁷ *TBDD*, lines 614–617 pp. 18–19, West, “Díberg”, p. 959. An interesting, if disturbing, modern parallel exists for the actions of Ingcél. In war-torn southern Sudan, youths who join a violent ethnic militia known as the SPLA are instilled with an ideology of ‘hyper-masculinity’, the graduation song for this warrior group includes the chant “Even your father, give him a bullet! Even your mother, give her a bullet! Your gun is your food, your gun is your wife!” S.E. Hutchinson, “Nuer Ethnicity Militarized”, *Anthropology Today*, vol. 16, 3, June 2000, pp. 6–23, 11.

amid the carnage. Thus the sons of Donn Désa sacrificed their own kinsmen in order to restore their riotous privileges.⁹⁸

Togail Bruidne Da Derga therefore suggests that any restriction on traditional rights to plunder might result in a reaction, not only from the *fian* but also from the youthful warriors of the region who soon came to swell their ranks.⁹⁹ This reaction took the form of violent ravaging, characterised in the tale by the employment of canine imagery, and resulting in a period of expulsion or exile. During this period of marginalisation the *fian* considered it acceptable to form an alliance with a similar warrior fraternity from another culture in order to facilitate their thirst for plunder and violence. This alliance was forged by ritualised oaths to do harm which may have been similar in character to those already noted in the *Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae* above. Furthermore, the warrior's thirst for violence was so powerful that it resulted in a contravention of one of early medieval Irish society's fundamental social taboos: kinship slaying. In this instance, that thirst was only quenched by attacks upon the young warrior's host communities. The tale, therefore, clearly indicates the strain that *fian* membership could place upon the ties of family and kindred, both fictive and real.¹⁰⁰ Although the *fian* was a socially excluded institution it was clearly still able to interact with society and exert pressure upon it. This unstable symbiosis created an almost parasitic relationship between the warrior fraternity and its origin community. This relationship was prone to volatility especially at moments when the cultural and social norms of that community were transcended by specific individuals or groups.¹⁰¹

The ambiguous and contradictory nature of the *fian* and the sources that relate to it makes this institution extremely difficult to classify. As Richard Sharpe has noted there is "a substantial gulf between the clerical and native evaluation in that grey area where the marauder and the hero become confused."¹⁰² In medieval Irish literature the *fian* are portrayed as a group who exist outside of society and authority

⁹⁸ *TBDD*, pp. 21–46, see also Nagy, *Wisdom*, pp. 80–81, McCone, *Pagan Past*, p. 206 and McCone, "Aided Cheltchair", p. 16.

⁹⁹ For a possible Welsh parallel see above and chapter 5.

¹⁰⁰ Conaire had refused to execute his foster brothers for their violent acts of pillaging stating instead that "...my foster brothers were dear to me, beloved was the *fian* band." ("*batar comalta carthacha dún. Ba hinmain in fianlag*") *TBDD*, lines 505–506, p. 15, translation from Nagy, *Wisdom*, p. 81.

¹⁰¹ McCone, "Aided Cheltchair", p. 22.

¹⁰² Sharpe, "*Laicus*", p. 90.

but who are paradoxically involved in the political struggles of medieval Irish kings.¹⁰³ Such paradoxical portrayals have proved to be a real headache for historians attempting to interpret and understand medieval Irish society. For example, it has been recognised that several categories of men mentioned in the Irish law tracts such as young, unmarried and propertyless men (*fer midboth*) and martial enforcers of vengeful justice (*aire échta*) are often associated with or indistinguishable from the members of the *fian*. Yet, it is clear that these former categories had a firmly established place within society.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that the supposedly marginal *fian* bands quartered themselves within the community during the hard winter months just as their Scandinavian Viking counterparts are known to have done.¹⁰⁵

The Mursi: An Anthropological Parallel

There are many dangers in using anthropological parallels.¹⁰⁶ Yet, given the culturally prolific nature of ritualistic initiation societies, one particular example may, at least, provide some enlightening ideas that will help to unlock the meaning of the enigmatic portrayal of the *fian* extant in the medieval Irish literature. The Mursi are a pastoral people living in an area of fragmented political units in southwest Ethiopia who have been closely studied by David Turton.¹⁰⁷ Their society is based on agriculture, warfare and a complex age-grade system in which men are grouped into conceptual age-sets. These age-sets do not own anything because cattle and land ownership are related to kinship and family. The age-sets do not perform any political or administrative function. They may be given military and political tasks but they merely act as agents of force. These age-sets assemble for one reason only and that

¹⁰³ Nagy, *Wisdom*, p. 42.

¹⁰⁴ Patterson, *Cattle Lords*, pp. 350 and 215–216.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 123. The *fian*'s participation in feasting also suggests direct contact with the community see McCone, *Pagan Past*, pp. 221–222.

¹⁰⁶ The complexity of social groups and the differences in both physical environment and chronology make such parallels particularly difficult to justify. Nevertheless, if we regard history as a study of other cultures then such parallels, when used with care, can improve interpretations and make an important contribution to historical analysis. For a fuller debate on the use of anthropology in the historical discourse see, D. Turton, "History, Age and the Anthropologists" in G. Ausenda (ed.), *After Empire: Towards an Ethnology of European Barbarians* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1995), pp. 96–99, 109–112.

¹⁰⁷ Turton, "Anthropologists", pp. 95–109.

is the affirmation of masculinity through ritual violence. As Turton remarks,

That they have political and military functions and characteristics is only a consequence of their ritual role. The men's cults are there to make men into men which makes it one of the institutions which they must at all costs preserve... male military activity is seen as a ritualised activity from the outset, not as a purely pragmatic activity which is given the stamp of legitimacy by ritual.¹⁰⁸

For the Mursi then, the conduct of warfare and plunder is, in itself, ritualistic behaviour. It can only be undertaken by an individual who has been ritually initiated. Masculine identity can only be asserted and, indeed, reasserted through warfare and plunder. As a result the establishment of an individual's gender identity is intimately associated with the political and ethnic identity of the community. It is not sufficient for the Mursi warrior to have been trained in arms; he must also have been ritually transformed in order to participate in such activities. This transformation does not affect the individual's conduct in daily life. However, it does signify that individual's official right to participate in warfare and his ability to die as an adult male warrior.¹⁰⁹

We can see here readily apparent parallels with the *fian*. The *fian* was a ritualised institution devoted to male violence, age initiation and the establishment of gender identities. It, too, became involved in political and administrative activities, but did not participate in the political world. The *fian* member, like the Mursi warrior, sought to assert his masculinity through the practice of ritual violence. In addition, he sought to preserve traditional cultural values that were crucial for maintenance of communal identity and power. If the law tract *Tecosca Cormaic* were correct and every man was a *fian* member until he inherited property then this would appear to suggest that large numbers of individuals entered the *fian*. However, if we apply the example of the Mursi men's cult to the *fian* then it would be possible for an individual who had been ritually transformed to return to normal life within the community and yet subsequently re-enter the *fian* when ritualised violence was required. This may help to explain the continuing affiliation between members of the *fian* and members of more stable groups that existed within the community. When regarded from this perspective the *fian* was not

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 103.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 103–106.

simply an institution that initiated boys into warrior manhood. It was an institution that facilitated the perpetuation of masculine identity within the warrior class as a whole.

The fundamental social significance of the *fian* meant that it was likely to be a resilient institution. Gerald of Wales provides some evidence that such groups were still prevalent within Irish society at the end of the twelfth century. Gerald remarked that Irish warriors were extremely volatile in nature and devoted to rapine and plunder.¹¹⁰ He also commented that the “woods are their forts and swamps their trenches” which corresponds with insular accounts regarding the *fian*’s residence in marginal locations.¹¹¹ Gerald’ descriptions of Irish mores were undoubtedly exaggerated and biased. Nevertheless, his depiction of the surviving pre-Christian behavioural traits extant within the Irish warrior caste receives support from the native Irish annals.¹¹² For example, the *Annals of Connacht* described violent armed bands as “sons of a curse” (“*macaib malachtan*”) during the thirteenth century.¹¹³ Furthermore, as Simms has remarked, the horror that these groups instilled must “lay in the fact that...such bands both in behaviour and even perhaps physical appearance resembled the Old Irish *diberga* and *fianna*.”¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ *Topographia Hibernica et Expugnatio Hibernica*, J.F. Dimock (ed.) (Wiesbaden, 1964, orig. printed London: Longman, 1867), dist. iii, caps. x, pp. 149–150, xx, p. 165, xxi, pp. 165–166, xxii, p. 167 for translation see *The History and Topography of Ireland*, J.J. O’Meara (ed. and trans.) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), caps. 93, pp. 100–103, 99, p. 106, 100, p. 107, 101, pp. 108–109. The *Topographia* was written during the final quarter of the twelfth century as a work of praise to Henry II. Gerald made very similar comments about the Welsh, see *Itinerarium Kambriæ et Descriptio Kambriæ*, J.F. Dimock (ed.) (Weisbaden, 1964, orig. published London: Longman, 1868), lib. ii, cap. ii, p. 207 (translation in *The Journey Through Wales/Description of Wales*, L. Thorpe (ed. and trans.) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p. 257. In addition, he also noted that the Irish warriors all excelled in the throwing of spears and missiles (as we have seen a skill essential to the *fian* member).

¹¹¹ ‘*Silvis namque pro castris, paludibus utitur pro fossatis*.’ *TH/EH*, dist. iii, cap. xxxvii, p. 183 translation taken from O’Meara, *HTI*, p. 119. Similarly, Gerald remarked that the Welsh youths practised their military skills in wilderness regions.

¹¹² Gerald clearly felt that the secular population of Ireland were Christian in name only, for examples see *TH/EH*, dist. iii, cap. x, pp. 149–151, xix, p. 164, xxv, p. 169, xxvi, pp. 170–171 see also O’Meara, *HTI*, caps. 93, 98, 102, 103, pp. 100–111.

¹¹³ *Annála Connact, The Annals of Connacht*, A. Martin Freeman (ed. and trans.) (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1944) 1233, p. 46. Another band were similarly referred to as “*meic mallachtan*” in an entry for 1236, p. 64.

¹¹⁴ K. Simms, “Gaelic Warfare in the Middle Ages” in T. Bartlett et al. (eds.), *A Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 99–116, 100. There may be an element of historical continuity connecting the

Warfare and Masculinity: The Scottish Context

Given similarities in culture and social structure it should be possible to discern the existence of comparable warrior fraternities within other societies of medieval Britain. Yet, when we turn to Ireland's neighbour, Scotland, we find that our analysis is somewhat restricted by the poor rate of survival of the early medieval historical and literary sources from that region.¹¹⁵ Matters are further complicated by the difficulty of defining what we mean when we talk about Scotland in this period. For example, the term *Scotia* as it was applied in contemporary sources does not correspond to the geographical region that we might regard as the kingdom of Scotland until the second half of the twelfth century. During the tenth and eleventh centuries, then, this term appears to have been used only with regard to the lands that lie between the Forth the central Grampians and the Spey.¹¹⁶ Indeed, although the provinces of Galloway, Lothian and Strathclyde appear to have recognised the authority of the Scottish ruler they retained a significant degree of autonomy in this period.¹¹⁷ In addition, the West Highlands, Western Isles, Caithness and the Orkneys were under the rule of powerful and independent Norse chieftains whose ancestors had settled these regions during the ninth century. Yet, in spite of this political fragmentation the various Gaelic speaking communities of medieval Scotland remained closely bound to their Irish counterparts by powerful political, linguistic and cultural affiliations. These communities appear to have occupied a similar conceptual world and shared comparable social structures and belief systems.¹¹⁸ Broun has convincingly argued that during the early medieval period (i.e. 800–1200) the Scots and the Irish perceived themselves to be part of a homogenous community that was "... united

fian with the violent Irish mercenaries called *kernes* of the later medieval period and the sixteenth-century *ceithearn* who were popularly described as "a shower of Hell." K. Simms, "Nomadry in Medieval Ireland", *Peritia*, 5, 1986, pp. 379–393, 388 and Simms, "Gaelic Warfare", p. 100.

¹¹⁵ D. Broun, *The Irish Identity of the Kingdom of the Scots* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1999), pp. 5–6.

¹¹⁶ R.R. Davies, *The First English Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 56.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Furthermore, many of the surviving Old Irish sagas involve Scottish characters and locations. See Broun, *Identity*, pp. 189–192 and Nagy, *Wisdom*, 1, 6–7.

by the same Gaelic language, high culture and major saints' cults."¹¹⁹ Medieval observers also passed comment upon the close cultural ties between these communities. Gerald of Wales remarked that the populations of these two regions shared "an affinity in language and culture as well as in weapons and customs."¹²⁰ It is also significant that the later medieval Scottish population shared the body of Fenian folklore and traditions.¹²¹ This strongly suggests that the above analysis regarding the existence of *fian* fraternities in Ireland might be equally applicable to medieval Scottish society. Let us now briefly examine the evidence that we do have in order to support this contention.

The *Prophecy of Berchán* is a medieval Irish poem attributed to the ninth-century saint of that name. In actuality three different authors living in three different centuries appear to have composed the poem. The first fourteen stanzas seem to have been written during the mid-ninth century. The central body of the poem, which refers in some detail to Scottish royal affairs, was composed during the mid-eleventh century. The final portion of the poem appears to have been added during the late twelfth century.¹²² Interestingly, the eleventh-century poet remarked that, following the death of the Scottish king, Causantín mac Aeda in 952 his subjects found themselves "under the feet of wolf packs (*cuan*) . . . without a high-king, without mutual protection."¹²³ This stanza would appear to suggest that without the restraining hand of kingship, *fian*-style bands within Scotland would plague the region with brigandage. Indeed, this is a sentiment that receives substantial support from the later medieval Scottish chroniclers. John of Fordun, who wrote his *Chronicle of the Scottish Nation* during the mid-fourteenth century, certainly felt that the early kingdom of the Scots had suffered from the ravages of such warrior bands, especially within the traditional Gaelic commu-

¹¹⁹ Broun, *Identity*, p. 1. This contention is supported by Séan Duffy see "The Bruce Brothers and the Irish Sea World 1306–29", *CMCS*, 21, 1991, pp. 55–86, 59.

¹²⁰ "Quod tam linguae quam cultus, tam amorum etiam quam morum, usque in hodiernum probat affinitas." *Topographia Hibernica*, dist. iii, cap. vii, p. 147, translation from O'Meara, *HTI*, p. 99.

¹²¹ Nagy, *Wisdom*, p. 1.

¹²² B.T. Hudson (ed. and trans.), *The Prophecy of Berchán* (Westport, CT/London: Greenwood Press, 1996), pp. 14–16.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 87. The warriors of Clann Chais are similarly referred to as *cuan* (wolf-packs) in the late eleventh-century Irish text *Lebor na Cert*, M. Dillon (ed. and trans.) (Dublin: Irish Texts Society, 1962), p. 28. See below for a fuller analysis of this source.

nity of Moray.¹²⁴ For example, John suggests that Donald II (889–900) had been murdered whilst attempting to curb the activities of brigand bands that were plundering the regions beyond the Mounth.¹²⁵ Similarly, Donald's son, Malcolm I (943–954), was said to have been slain by the men of Moray because of his staunch efforts to suppress the “wrong-doing of brigands.”¹²⁶ Furthermore, Malcolm's son, Duf (962–966) was abducted and killed whilst his forces were attempting to tackle ravaging warrior bands that were operating from wilderness locations near the settlement of Forres in Moray.¹²⁷ It therefore appears that the problems faced by the fictional Irish king Conaire in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* were not confined to the literary sources or, indeed, to Ireland.¹²⁸ The accounts of twelfth-century English chroniclers certainly suggest that Scottish kings continued to encounter problems when attempting to control the unruly tendencies of the more traditional elements within their communities.¹²⁹ An anecdote from the English author William of Newburgh (1136–1201) suggests that even a man of the Church might be tempted into a life of rapine within the Scottish warrior fraternity. William relates that during the second quarter of the twelfth century an English monk named Wimund was posted to a monastery in Furness.¹³⁰ He was clearly a talented individual and was soon appointed as a prelate in the Isle of Man.¹³¹ However, William relates that following this

¹²⁴ *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, 2 vols. W.F. Skene (ed. and trans.) (Lampeter, Dyfed: Llanerch, 1993, first published Edinburgh 1872). John of Fordun compiled this history using many sources that have not survived into the modern period. His account, although relatively late in date, is therefore an extremely valuable source for early medieval Scottish history. See B. Webster “John of Fordun and the Independent Identity of the Scots” in A. Smyth (ed.), *Medieval Europeans* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 85–102 and Broun, *Identity*, pp. 12–16.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 154. John relates that Donald died from an illness caused either by the over exertion of having to deal with these disruptive bands or by poisoning at the hands of evil men. His account is supported by the fifteenth-century historian Walter Bower in his *Scotichronicon*, D.E.R. Watt et al. (eds. and trans.) (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989), vol. ii, p. 328.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. i, pp. 159–160. “...latrocinancium maliciam reprimans...” *Scotichron.*, vol. ii, pp. 348–349.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. i, pp. 160–161, see also *Scotichron.*, vol. ii, pp. 352–353.

¹²⁸ See above.

¹²⁹ For examples see chapter 5.

¹³⁰ *William of Newburgh, The History of English Affairs, Book I*, P.G. Walsh and M.J. Kennedy (eds. and trans.) (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1988), p. 103. William's account of Wimund's career may be regarded as relatively accurate as the wayward bishop lived out the final years of his life at the Yorkshire abbey of Byland and it appears that the author knew him personally.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 104–105.

Wimund became swollen with pride and self-importance; he gathered together a band of “needy and reckless men” (“*congregens viros inopes et audaces*”) and proclaimed that the kings of Scotland had usurped the province of Moray to which he was the rightful heir.¹³² Following this Wimund and his war band are said to have

...embarked on a fierce and wild course through the neighbouring islands... Every day the number of his followers increased; he stood out prominently almost head and shoulders amongst them, and like some mighty commander fired the spirits of all. He made sallies against the regions of Scotland, laying waste the whole area with plunderings and with murders. When the king's army was dispatched against him, he returned to more distant forests or took refuge on the sea, and this frustrated the entire war-machine; once the army had retired, he would burst out again from his hidden lairs to molest the regions.¹³³

Wimund's forces became so feared that the Scottish king, David I, was forced to appease him. Indeed, it seems that David attempted to redirect the bishop's violent energies towards the south by granting him the lands in the border regions near Wimund's old house at Furness, north Lancashire.¹³⁴ Yet, in spite of this royal recognition the king's supporters subsequently ambushed Wimund and routed his forces. They deprived this ecclesiastical renegade of his manhood, power and status by removing both his eyes and his testicles.¹³⁵

William of Newburgh's description of Wimund's followers is certainly reminiscent of the violent and egalitarian *fian* war bands that operated from the margins of Irish society. His account suggests that it was Wimund's ecclesiastical status rather than the violent behaviour of his Scottish followers that was truly noteworthy in this instance. Warrior bands such as Wimund's were probably a common phenomenon in twelfth-century Scottish society. Furthermore, there is significant evidence to suggest that similar groups also existed within medieval Welsh society.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ “...*per vicinas coepit insulas ferociter debacchari;...augebatur in dies satellitem copiis, inter quos nimirum ipse eminens fere ab humero et sursum tanquam dux magnas omnium animos accendebat. Excurrebat in provincias Scotiae rapinis et homicidiis cuncta exterminans. Cumque adversus eum regius exercitus mitteretur, in remotiores se saltus recipiens vel in oceanum refugiens illum apparatus bellicum eludebat, et recedente exercitu rursum ex locis abditis ad infestandas provincias erumpebat.*” Ibid., pp. 104–105

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 106–107. See G.W.S. Barrow, *Kingship and Unity, Scotland 1000–1306* (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), p. 51.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

Warfare and Masculinity: The Welsh Ynfydyon

Wales has a large corpus of medieval literary texts that reveal strong cultural affinities with Ireland. Eleven medieval Welsh tales known collectively under the label of the *Mabinogion* are preserved in two fourteenth-century manuscripts but appear to have been originally written down from the late eleventh-century onwards and almost certainly record elements from an earlier oral tradition.¹³⁶ These stories include *Culhwch and Olwen*, a tale that is clearly concerned with masculine rites of passage. The hero, Culhwch is said to be a boy “not yet of age to take a wife” (“*nyt oet y mi etwa wreica*”) who has not yet seen military action.¹³⁷ Culhwch’s stepmother, therefore, challenges him to win the hand of Olwen, daughter of the chief giant, Ysbaddaden. Culhwch is subsequently given arms and sets out to the court of Arthur to obtain help. On arrival at the court Culhwch defies tradition and enters into the feasting hall on horseback while the heroes are still eating.¹³⁸ Culhwch then invokes the help of Arthur by reciting the names of all in his retinue. Many of these individuals have supernatural or animal characteristics similar to portrayals of the *fian*. For example; Anwas the Winged (*Anwas Edeinaw*), Gwrfan Wild Hair (*Gwrfan Gwallt Aweyn*), Gilla Stag Shank (*Gilla Goeshyd*) and the two whelps of the bitch Rhymhi (*deu geneu Gast Rymhi*).¹³⁹ It is only with the aid of this warrior fraternity that Culhwch is able to complete the tasks set him by Ysbaddaden and win Olwen’s hand. This tale, therefore, deals with a familiar process of initiation. A boy takes arms, he contradicts social norms, he joins a warrior band and enters a “world of hunting, fighting, shape shifting and magic”, finally he earns the right to marry and enter society through acts of prowess.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ *The Mabinogion*, G. Jones and T. Jones (eds. and trans.) (London: Dent, 1974), p. ix.

¹³⁷ *Culhwch ac Olwen*, R. Bromwich and D. Simon Evans (eds.) (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988), line 49, p. 2, translation taken from Jones and Jones, *Mabinog*, p. 96.

¹³⁸ “*Ac a goryw pawb diskynnu vrth y porth ar yr yskynuaen, nys goruc ef, namyn ar y gorywyd y doeth y mywen.*” (“and what every man did, to dismount at the gate on the horse block, he did not do; but on his steed he came inside.”), *Ibid.*, lines 140–141, p. 6. translation from Jones and Jones, *Mabinog*, p. 99.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, line 193, p. 8, line 294, p. 11, line 298, p. 11, line 315, p. 12, translations from Jones and Jones, *Mabinog*, pp. 101, 104–105.

¹⁴⁰ *Mabinog*, p. xxi.

In *Branwen uerch Llyr* (Branwen daughter of Llyr), Bendigeidfran the king of Britain has two uterine brothers named Nisien and Efnisien. Nisien is the epitome of a good youth whilst Efnisien has an evil and quarrelsome personality. These two individuals appear to signify the light and dark side of the warrior's character. Indeed, although Efnisien belongs to the family group he is portrayed as an external figure who is not allowed to participate in the political decision making process. When Bendigeidfran's sister, Branwen, is betrothed to the Irish king, Matholwch, Efnisien's opinion is not consulted. Efnisien retaliates for this by cruelly mutilating Matholwch's horses and so jeopardises the proposed union through an affront to the Irish king's honour. Bendigeidfran subsequently placates Matholwch with gifts and the marriage alliance goes ahead. However, once Matholwch returns to Ireland his people remind him of the dishonour done to him by Efnisien. They subsequently goad him into reducing Branwen into a lowly position that is tantamount to slavery. When Bendigeidfran receives word of the dishonour done to his sister he invades Ireland with the forces of Britain. In an attempt to appease the Welsh and avoid a blood bath the Irish build a great feasting hall in honour of Bendigeidfran. Following the construction of this hall they treacherously hide warriors inside with the intention of ambushing and annihilating the Welsh forces. It is the renegade Efnisien who spots this Irish ruse and violently despatches the would-be attackers. After this massacre the two kings are reconciled and Matholwch promises the kingdom of Ireland to his son by Branwen.¹⁴¹ The dispute finally appears to have been resolved but at the subsequent celebratory feast Efnisien calls this young prince to him and then secretly declares to himself "...the outrage I will now commit is one the household will never expect."¹⁴² Following this he pitches his nephew headlong into the fire and kills him. A bitter and violent battle ensues between the Irish and Welsh. The Welsh subsequently win the day but only because Efnisien sacrifices his life whilst destroying a cauldron in which the Irish can regenerate their warriors.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ *The Mabinogion*, S. Davies (ed. and trans.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 22–31.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, “‘*T Duw y dygaf uyg kyffes*’, heb ynteu yn y uedwél ‘ys anhebic a gyflauan gan y tylweyth y wneuthur, a wnaf i yr awr honn.’”, Welsh version from *Branwen uerch Llyr*, D.S. Thomson (ed.) (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1961), lines 361–363, p. 14.

¹⁴³ *Mab.*, pp. 31–32.

The character of Efnisien appears to embody, not only the malevolence but also the extreme cultural significance of the youthful warrior. His martial prowess is indispensable to the Welsh and he twice saves Bendigeidfran's forces from disaster. Paradoxically, no conflict would have ever had arisen had it not been for his cruel and unexpected acts of violence. Yet, Efnisien's violent actions were far from mindless acts of delinquency, rather they provide an indication of the conservative nature of the warrior fraternity. Efnisien was attempting to preserve the cultural and ethnic integrity of his community by acting against the proposed mixing of Welsh and Irish royal blood embodied by the offspring of Branwen and Matholwch.¹⁴⁴ The method by which he achieved this end was through ritually enacted violence.

The tales of the *Mabinogion* illustrate the cultural significance of initiation rites, warrior fraternities and ritual acts of violence for Medieval Welsh society. Yet, medieval Welsh law codes provide no clear indication that an institution similar to the *fian* existed within Welsh society. Nevertheless, the *Law of Hywel Dda* does note that "furious thieves" (*ffyrnigwr*) had no right to *galanas* (compensation) indicating that brigands were legally removed from their kin group.¹⁴⁵ The late twelfth-century commentator Gerald of Wales noted that the youths of Wales would perambulate around the countryside in war bands under their chosen leader. Gerald remarks that

...by marching through the deep recesses of the woods and climbing mountain-peaks in times of peace, the young men train themselves to keep on the move both day and night... They spend their time in exercise and in practising with their weapons....¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ For some Old Norse Eddic parallels regarding reactions to the mixing of blood/ethnicity see Z. Borovský, "‘Er hone er blandin mjök’: Women and Insults in Old Norse Literature" in S.M. Anderson and K. Swenson (eds.), *Cold Counsel: Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology* (New York/London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 1–15, 1–5.

¹⁴⁵ Hywel Dda (?–950) was the powerful king of Dyfed, who ruled over much of Wales during the central years of the tenth century. The *Law of Hywel Dda* has been presented as a code compiled at his behest, however, it is in fact a compilation of law texts originating from a number of different regions in Wales and dating from the late-twelfth and early-thirteenth centuries. Elements within these various codes may well be based upon oral/customal traditions dating from Hywel's tenth-century reign although other elements are probably more reflective of twelfth and thirteenth century Welsh society. See *LHD*, p. 166. See also H. Pryce, *Native Law and the Church in Medieval Wales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 3.

¹⁴⁶ "Pacis quoque et juventutis tempore, silvas et saltus transpenetrare, montium alta transcurere, dies huic labori noctibus continuare ex industria prædisunt... Per turbas igitur et familias, capite sibi

This suggests that a period of membership within itinerant fraternities operating from wilderness locations was a common occupation for young Welshman of Gerald's day. Another late twelfth-century writer, Walter Map, also noted that it was a custom in Wales that the young men "should go out to raid and steal" ("*exeunt omnes iuvenes in predam, uel in furta*").¹⁴⁷

The Welsh chronicler of the *Brut y Tywysogyon* provides abundant evidence that youthful princes and nobles operated in ravaging war bands.¹⁴⁸ The activities of such war bands were frequently associated with unrestrained violence, rapine, abduction and the enslavement of captives. Several entries within the *Brut* for the early twelfth century remain particularly focussed upon the activities of a group of youthful warriors who appear to be closely analogous to the Irish *fian*. The chronicler describes these warriors as *ynfydyon* or 'hot-heads' a term which is clearly evocative of an impetuous, youthful male fraternity.¹⁴⁹ This term is used only five times within the chronicle and only in reference to Welsh warriors who were violently resisting the incursions made by Norman and English settlers into Wales.¹⁵⁰ The term is first applied in 1110 with reference to the activities of the war band of the Welsh prince Owain ap Cadwgan of Powys. This entry notes:

praefecto, gentis huius iuventus incedit; solum armis et otio data..." *IK/DK*, lib., i, caps. viii and x, pp. 181, 183. Translation from Thorpe, *JDW*, pp. 234–236.

¹⁴⁷ Like Gerald of Wales, Walter Map had Welsh blood running through his veins, moreover, he lived in the Welsh marches near Hereford. Walter composed his *De Nugis Curialium* during the final quarter of the twelfth century. It was a satirical text intended to highlight the hypocrisies of life at the royal court whilst providing also providing a behavioural guide for contemporary courtiers. See, *De Nugis Curialium, Courtier's Trifles*, M.R. James et al. (eds. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 188–191, 197–201. W. Aird, "“Not Hell, but a place very like it”: Walter Map and the court of the Norman and Angevin kings", unpublished paper presented to the History and Archaeology Research Forum, Cardiff University Centre for Lifelong Learning, February 2008.

¹⁴⁸ *Brut y Tywysogyon or The Chronicle of the Princes. Red Book of Hergest Version*, T. Jones (ed. and trans.) (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955), for examples see entries for 952, 954, 993, 994, 1035, 1045, 1069, 1075, 1088, pp. 13, 19, 23, 25, 27. The *Brut* is a late thirteenth-century vernacular redaction of an earlier Latin chronicle. It is considered by historians to be a reliable source for the late eleventh and early twelfth century.

¹⁴⁹ Babcock has translated the term *ynfydyon* as 'imbecile', however, this translation overstates the pejorative sense of this word. Thomas Jones' translation as 'hot-head' appears far more appropriate given the context of men acting rashly rather than idiotically, see R.S. Babcock, "Imbeciles and Normans: The *Ynfydyon* of Gruffudd ap Rhys Reconsidered", *HSJ*, vol. 4, 1992, pp. 1–11.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

...and for the second time they went and summoned *ynfydyon* from Ceredigion to add to their numbers, and they made for the land by night and burned it and slew all they found in it, and plundered others and took others with them in fetters and sold them to their folk or sent them bound to the ships.¹⁵¹

This extract portrays the *ynfydyon* as a youthful group involved in violent behaviour and slave-raiding activity. Like the warrior youths in the Old Irish tale *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* they were summoned to swell the ranks of a warrior fraternity reacting against cultural changes occurring within their community. The only other instance of the application of this term in the *Brut* is during a similar uprising in 1116 instigated by Gruffudd ap Rhys, prince of Deheubarth. Gruffudd returned to Wales in this year following a period of exile in Ireland. Together with a war band based in the forest wildernesses of South Wales, he consistently targeted English strongholds such as Swansea and Aberystwyth. The success of Gruffudd's force appears to have also attracted other like-minded youthful warriors because the *Brut y Tywysogion* notes that

...there had gathered around him many young *ynfydyon* from all sides, lured by the desire for booty or by an urge to restore and to renew the Britannic kingdom.¹⁵²

The *Brut* further describes Gruffudd's followers as being in a "raging fury, like a band of thoughtless inhabitants without a ruler over them."¹⁵³ This would appear to be an apt description of an egalitarian men's cult in a frenzy of violence.

¹⁵¹ "Ac etwa y mae[nt] ynn trigyaw ynn teruyneu y wlat. A'r eilweith yd aethant a galw ymudyon Keredigaywn y chwanecau y rif, a chyrchu dros nos y wlat a'e llorci, a llad paweb o'r a gawssant yndi, ac yspeillaw ereill a dwyn ereill gantunt yg karchar, ac eu gwerthu y dynyon neu y hanuon ynn rwym y'r llogeu, a gwedy llosgi y tei a llad a gawssant o'r anyueileit." *ByT*, pp. 68–69.

¹⁵² "A gwedy clybot hynny ac ymgynnullaw attaw llawer o ymudyon ieuenc o boptu wedy y twyllaw o chwant anreithu neu o geissaw atgyweiraw neu atnewydu Bryttannawl deyrnas." *Ibid.*, pp. 86–87.

¹⁵³ "...namyn mileinlluc, megys kyweithas o giwtawt bobyl digyghor heb lywyawdyr arnunt...", *ibid.*, pp. 92–93. Jones's translation here is open to debate, *mileinlluc* may be an error for *mileinllu*, literally 'a host of villeins' or 'rabble'. The form *mileinllu* is interchangeable with *bileinllu*, therefore the sentence might be translated as "a rabble, like a company of rash people without a leader [over them]". However, the idea of the *ynfydyon* as furious and indiscriminately violent youthful warriors is in keeping with their activities as catalogued the author of the *Brut*, personal communication, my thanks to Dr Dylan Foster-Evans, School of Welsh, Cardiff University.

Warfare and Masculinity: The Old Norse and Old English Evidence

The ritually violent behaviour of male warrior fraternities was not simply a phenomenon associated with 'Celtic' societies. Similar fraternities can be identified operating within the Germanic cultures of Scandinavia and Anglo-Saxon England.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, the archaeological evidence from cemeteries strongly suggests that systems of age-grading existed in both societies during the pre-Christian era. Research has revealed that the age of twelve was an important threshold in the male individual's life cycle.¹⁵⁵ It is from this age group that shields and swords are found deposited in male graves suggesting the bestowal of arms and the beginning of the transition into man-hood.¹⁵⁶ A second threshold may have been crossed around the age of fifteen after which the orientation of the graves becomes more standardised, a greater number of grave goods are deposited and grave structures and coffins become more common.¹⁵⁷ This would appear to signal the attainment of manhood and full warrior status. The abundance of weaponry associated with such adolescent male graves is indicative of a society in which male identity and violent behaviour were closely linked.

By far our richest source of evidence regarding such warrior groups comes, once again, from the literary texts. This is especially true with regards to the Old Norse sagas, many of which were written down in Iceland during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, much later than the events they describe. The sagas therefore constitute a problematic body of sources but, like the *Fenian* literature, they do clearly convey the ideals, concepts, values and taboos of their contemporary warrior audience whilst also providing evidence concerning expected behavioural traits and information about rituals and initiations.¹⁵⁸ Strong cultural affinities existed between Scandinavian society and the societies of medieval Britain and there was, of course, substantial Scandinavian settlement in

¹⁵⁴ See Davidson, "Training", pp. 11–21.

¹⁵⁵ H. Härke, "Early Anglo-Saxon Social Structure" in J. Hines (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1997), pp. 125–160, 128.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ See J.P. Schjødr, "Myths as Sources for Rituals—Theoretical and Practical Implications" in M. Clunies Ross (ed.), *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society* (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2003), pp. 261–278 and also M. Clunies Ross, "Two Icelandic Theories of Ritual", *Old Norse Myths*, pp. 279–299.

the British Isles.¹⁵⁹ So a closer examination of this material will provide a useful and relevant parallel.

In the mythical *Saga of the Volsungs* an initiate youth, named Sinfjotli, exhibits characteristics which are strongly comparable to the Old Irish *fian* warrior and the practice of *díberg*.¹⁶⁰ Sinfjotli is said to be a youth who is not yet of age to seek vengeance. The saga relates that he “did not put much store in kinship” suggesting that, like the *fian* member, he had distanced himself from his kindred group and removed himself from the blood-price compensation system.¹⁶¹ Sinfjotli also resides in wilderness locations and, together with an older warrior named Sigmund, pursues a life of ritualised brigandage. Like the *fian*, these warriors are closely associated with wolf-like or canine characteristics and undertake ritual transformations; donning magical wolfskins and declaring an oath to kill and maim.¹⁶² Following this declaration, Sigmundr and Sinfjotli then rampage around forest locations slaughtering folk indiscriminately and howling like a wolves whilst enveloped in a these canine carcasses.

A war band referred to as the *Jómsvikings* also constitute a warrior fraternity which appears to be closely analogous to those evident in the societies of medieval Ireland and Wales. The *Jómsvikings* feature in a number of sagas dating from the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, including *Oláf Saga Tryggvasonar*, *Fagrskinna Saga*, Snorri Sturlusson’s *Heimskringla* and the eponymously titled *Saga of the Jómsvikings*.¹⁶³ The *Jómsviking* element in these sagas appear to have been based upon earlier skaldic oral traditions regarding a war band involved in a struggle between the Norwegian earl Hákon Sigurðson and Danish forces in the late 10th Century. *The Saga of the Jómsvikings* portrays an exclusive warrior fraternity based in the marginal location of an island fortress.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ See below.

¹⁶⁰ The *Saga of the Volsungs* was written down sometime during the first three quarters of the thirteenth century yet it is almost certainly based upon a much earlier oral tradition, the main body of the narrative is a retelling of certain heroic lays from the *Poetic Edda* see J.L. Byock (ed. and trans.), *The Saga of the Volsungs* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), pp. 1–26.

¹⁶¹ “*ættir hann eigi mjök frændrekinn*” *Volsungs*, chapter 8, pp. 44–45.

¹⁶² Behaviour that is closely analogous the the warrior Laignech Fáelad in the Old Irish tale *Cóir Anmann* see above and West, “Díberg”, p. 955.

¹⁶³ Ó. Halldórsson, “Jómsviking Saga” in P. Pulsiano (ed.), *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland, 1993), pp. 343–344.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* According to the saga’s author, prior to establishing their fortress, Jómsborg, this war band had been active in the Irish Sea region harrying the coasts of Western Britain.

This microcosmic warrior society had its own hierarchy, rules and codes of behaviour described in the following manner:

...no one might join the company who was over fifty or under eighteen. All members were to be between these ages. Kinship must not weigh when considering for membership a man who wished to join. No member was to flee from any man who was his equal in bravery and as well armed as himself. Each member must avenge any other member as though he were his brother. No one was to utter words of fear or be afraid of anything, however hopeless matters looked. All the booty brought in from their expeditions was to be carried to the standard- of whatever value, big or small- and anyone not abiding by this rule must leave the company... No one was to have a woman in the fort, and no one was to be away for more than three days. And if it became known after a man had been admitted into the company that he had earlier slain the father or brother or some other near kinsman of another member, Palnatóki was to be the judge....¹⁶⁵

This extract exhibits a number of, by now, familiar characteristics associated with the medieval warrior fraternity; the *Jómsvikings* were thought to be an exclusive all-male group who placed a high value on prowess and violence; the fraternity was regulated through age grades, personal qualities and initiation rituals; it was separated from blood price compensation systems and kindred groups but, with substituted bonds of fictive kinship; it was relatively egalitarian in ethos but nonetheless structured with an internal hierarchy and with a clear leader in the character Palnatóki.

The *Saga of the Jómsvikings* provides an exaggerated literary construction of a relatively common social phenomenon. Indeed, the powerful significance and prolific nature of comparable fraternal warrior groups in the medieval Germanic societies has been widely acknowledged.¹⁶⁶ The well documented *Berserkr* characterised in Old Norse sagas as violent youthful warriors who assume ursine or canine qualities, provides further

¹⁶⁵ *The Saga of the Jómsvikings*, L. Hollander (ed. and trans.) (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1955) pp. 63–64.

¹⁶⁶ G. Halsall, “Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West: An Introductory Survey” in G. Halsall (ed.), *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1998), pp. 1–45, 8, 34, S. Pollington, *The English Warrior from the Earliest Times to 1066* (Hockwold-Cum-Wilton, Norfolk: Anglo-Saxon Books, 1996), J. Harris, “Love and Death in the *Männerbund*: An Essay with Special Reference to *Bjarkamál* and the *Battle of Maldon*” in H. Damico and J. Leyerle (eds.), *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period: Studies in Honour of Jess B. Bessinger Jr.* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1993), pp. 77–114, H. Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p. 69 Dumézil, *Destiny*, p. 141.

flesh to these bones. *Berserks* generally occur in pairs or groups of twelve; when in groups they usually constitute either a band of outlaws or an elite band of warriors.¹⁶⁷ The etymology of the term *berserkr* is disputed. It may derive from *bare-sark* or ‘bare-shirt’ referring to the *berserkr*’s habit of going ‘naked’, or rather, unarmored into battle.¹⁶⁸ Snorri Sturluson records this tradition in *Ynglinga Saga* relating that these warriors (whom Snorri associated with the pagan god Óðin)

...went without mailcoats, and were frantic as dogs or wolves; they bit their shields and were strong as bears or boars; they slew men, but neither fire nor iron could hurt them. This is known as ‘going berserk’ (*berserksgangr*)¹⁶⁹

Others have contended that the term should be read *bear-sark* or ‘bear-shirt’ describing some form of animal-skin dress, mask or hair style.¹⁷⁰ This is clearly in keeping with Sinjotli and Sigmund’s donning of magical wolf skins in the *Saga of the Volsungs*. The earliest recorded use of the term *berserkr* occurs in the skaldic verse *Haraldskvæði*, a praise work to the late ninth century Norwegian king Harald Finehair. This described these warriors as “wolf-skins” (*úlfheðnar*) a term which also appears in a number of later sagas including *Grettirs Saga* and *Vatnsdæla Saga*.¹⁷¹ This label is clearly suggestive of acquired magical shape shifting qualities; with *berserkr* warriors being perceived as marginal figures who blurred the boundaries between the human and animal worlds. Like the Irish hero Chú Chulainn, the *berserkr*, too, was thought to actually swell and change into bestial form, or at least to assume the ferocious qualities of the wolf or bear. Kveldulf in *Egils Saga* was spoken of as such a shapechanger, and *Hrólfr’s Saga Kraka* tells of the hero, Bjarki,

¹⁶⁷ B. Blaney, “Berserkr” in Pulsiano, *Medieval Scandinavia*, pp. 37–38.

¹⁶⁸ J. Lindow, *Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes and Beliefs* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 75–76.

¹⁶⁹ “...en hans menn fóru brynjulausir ok váru galnir sem hundar eða vargar, bitu í skjoldu sína, varu srekir sem birnir eða grðungar. Þeir drápu mannfólkit en hvárki eldr néjarn orti ú þá. Þat er kallaðr berserksgangr.” *Ynglinga Saga*, chapter 6, Snorri Sturluson *Heimskringla*, vol. i, B. Aðalbjarnarson (ed.) (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska Fornritafélag, 1941), p. 17, translation from Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths*, pp. 66–69.

¹⁷⁰ Lindow, *Norse Mythology*, p. 75.

¹⁷¹ *The Saga of Grettir the Strong*, 2, *CSI*, vol. ii, p. 50, *The Saga of the People of Vatnsdal*, 9, *CSI*, vol. iv, pp. 12–13, see also *The Saga of the People of Eyri*, 25 and 26, *CSI*, vol. v, pp. 157–161 Lindow, *Norse Mythology*, p. 75. Pictorial representations of *úlfheðnar* are also known from the sixth and seventh centuries in Scandinavia and Germany, see Blaney, “Berserkr”, pp. 37–38.

who assumed the shape of a bear in battle.¹⁷² These animal-like states are also associated with the violent frenzy mentioned by Snorri in the extract from *Ynglinga Saga*, above, and known as *berserksgangr*.¹⁷³

This frenzied state imbued the *berserkr* warrior with a magical immunity to weapons. Some *berserks* were thought to be inherently possessed of this immunity while others performed rituals to induce it. This perceived immunity to weapons may also have been connected with the animal-skin garments worn by the *berserkr* and associated with shape shifting capabilities. *Berserksgangr* might have been induced through the consumption of drugs such as the hallucinogenic mushrooms or alcohol; practices which correlate generally with ritual usages. The condition has been analysed by the psychologist Howard Fabing who wrote a fascinating neurological enquiry into the phenomenon during the 1950's. In light of Thomas Jones's chosen translation of the Middle Welsh term *ynfydyon*, above, it is extremely interesting that, similarly, Fabing associated the frenzied state of the Scandinavian warrior with hot-headedness (my italics):

This condition is said to have begun with shivering, chattering of the teeth, and chill in the body, and then the face swelled and changed its color. With this was connected a great *hot-headedness*, which at last gave over into a great rage, under which they howled as wild animals, bit the edge of their shields, and cut down everything they met without discriminating between friend or foe. When this condition ceased, a great dulling of the mind and feeble-ness followed, which could last for one or several days.¹⁷⁴

Unsurprisingly, given their capability for such unpredictable behaviour, attitudes towards *berserkr* warriors appear to have been somewhat ambivalent. Indeed, the *berserkr*'s place in society was limited by the terror and violence that was associated with *berserksgangr*. As superb warriors, they were due admiration; like the *flan*, *berserks* were employed

¹⁷² Kveldulf also enters into an animal like battle frenzy, *Egils Saga*, 1 and 27, *CSI*, vol. i, pp. 34, 63, see also *The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki*, J.L. Byock (ed. and trans.) (Harmonsworth: Penguin, 1998), pp. 37–38, Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths*, p. 68, Dumézil, *Destiny*, pp. 142–143.

¹⁷³ In *The Saga of the People of Eyri*, two Swedish *berserkr* warriors, Halli and Leikner, were said to work themselves up into such a frenzy that they “were not like human beings” (“...ok váru þá eigi í mannligu eðli, er þeir váru reiðir”), *The Saga of the People of Eyri*, 25, *CSI*, vol. v, p. 157.

¹⁷⁴ H. Fabing, “On Going Berserk: A neurochemical enquiry”, *Scientific Monthly*, 83, 1956, pp. 232–237, 234. In *Egil's Saga* Kveldulf was said to have been so weak following his frenzy that he was forced to take to his bed, *Egil's Saga*, 27, *CSI*, vol. i, p. 64.

as a kind of militia or mercenary force by powerful men. A key role of the *berserkr* seems to have been as a warrior attached to a king's retinue or bodyguard. Furthermore, a number of rulers are said to have employed *berserkr* shock-troops at the front of their battle ranks; a tactic clearly intended to terrify opposing forces.¹⁷⁵ Outside of these honourable roles, however, the *berserkr* became the stock villain of the sagas, typified as murderous brutes.¹⁷⁶ As we will see later in this chapter, *berserkr* warriors were also closely associated with uncontrollable sexual violence and the abduction and rape of individuals, particularly women.¹⁷⁷ Saxo Grammaticus, a Danish cleric writing during the first decade of the thirteenth century, raised the following complaints concerning such warrior forebears:

So outrageous and unrestrained were their ways that they ravished other men's wives and daughters; they seemed to have outlawed chastity and driven it to a brothel... Husbands were tormented with fear; their wives by the sport made of their bodies. Outrage was submitted to; respect for matrimony disappeared and sex combined with violence became the norm...¹⁷⁸

Later, in the same volume Saxo makes a further association between the virilisation of youths and violent behaviour lamenting that the young Danish warriors

...would harry and pillage the neighborhood, and frequently spilt great quantities of blood. They considered it manly and proper to devastate homes, cut down cattle, rifle everything and take away vast hauls of

¹⁷⁵ Lindow, *Norse Mythology*, p. 76, S. Barry, "Berserker: A Ferocious Viking Warrior", *Lambda Alpha Journal*, 33, 2003, pp. 2–9, 7.

¹⁷⁶ Or as Fabing describes them, "a predatory group of brawlers and killers who disrupted the peace of the Viking community repeatedly." "On going berserk", p. 232.

¹⁷⁷ B. Blaney "The Berserk Suitor: The Literary Application of a Stereotyped Theme", *Scandinavian Studies*, 54, 4, 1982, pp. 279–284.

¹⁷⁸ "*Adeo enim insolenter <se> indomiteque gesserunt, ut, constupratis aliorum nuptis ac filiabus, proscripsisse pudiciam atque in prostibulum relegasse uiderentur. Corruptis quoque matronarum fulcris, ne thoris quidem uirginalibus abstinebant... Mariti metu, coniuges corporum suorum ludibrio uexabantur. Iniuriis obtemperatum est. Cessit copularum respectus, uiolensque amplexuum usus extabat.*" Saxo Grammaticus, *The History of the Danes*, vol. i, H. Ellis Davidson and P. Fisher (eds. and trans.) (Woodbridge/Rochester, NY: Brewer, 1980), p. 118. Saxo's accounts in this respect were retrospective, he was referring back to the early medieval past. Nonetheless, his concerns are corroborated by many writers who were much closer to events including Adam of Bremen and Dudo of St. Quentin. For a fuller discussion of Saxo's text see Chapter 3.

booty, burn to the ground houses they had sacked, and butcher men and women indiscriminately.¹⁷⁹

Another clerical commentator from the region, Adam of Bremen who was writing in the 1070's, somewhat closer to the events he described, noted that such activities were characterised by indiscriminate slave-taking raids. Adam commented how these Viking warriors

...pay tribute to the Danish king for leave to plunder the barbarians who live about the sea in great numbers. Hence it also happens that the license granted them with respect of enemies is frequently misused against their own people. So true is this that they have no faith in one another, and as soon as one of them catches another, he mercilessly sells him into slavery either to one of his fellows or to a barbarian.¹⁸⁰

Although the *beserks* appear mainly in the saga materials, the twelfth-century Icelandic law tract *Grágás* includes several provisions which suggest that such warriors existed and that they created real problems for the community. Under a section of the laws dealing with treatment of homicide there are several provisions regarding the penalties for raiding in Iceland. These refer to bands of men residing in "islands or caves or fortified places or ships" who "take peoples property from them against their will or beat or bind or wound people if they have the power."¹⁸¹ *Grágás* relates that such men might be slain with relative impunity whilst they were raiding and were clearly excluded from kindred networks of compensation. Nonetheless it is made clear such raiders could be summoned to a legal assembly and that they might

¹⁷⁹ "At iuvenes latrocinio uiciniam incessere soliti, magnas sepe strages edebant. Populari penates, armenta sternere, diripere omnia, ingentem agree predam, spoliatis rebus edes exurere, mares passim cum feminis obtruncare, probitatis loco curatum est." Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁸⁰ "...regi Danico tributum soluunt, ut liceat eis praedam exercere a barbaris, qui circa hoc mare plurimi habundant. Unde etiam contingit, ut licentia, quam in hostes acceperunt, saepe abutantur in suos; adeo fide nulla utrique ad invicem sunt, et sine misericordia quisque alterum, mox ut ceperit, in ius famulicii vel socio vendit vel barbaro." Despite his ecclesiastical perspective, Adam constitutes a fairly reliable witness. He goes on to note that the Danish warriors would "immediately sell women who have been violated... No kind of punishment exists among them other than the ax and slavery", "...nisi quod mulieres, si constupratae fuerint, statim venduntur... Alia non est ibi species poena praeter securem vel servitutum." *Adam of Bremen, History of the Archbishops of Hamburg Bremen*, F.J. Tschan (ed. and trans.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), book iv, pp. 190–191, see also *Adami Gesta hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum/ex recensione Lappenbergii; in usum scholarum ex Monumentis Germaniae historicae recudi fecit Georgius Henricus Pertz* (Hannoverae: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1846), p. 158.

¹⁸¹ *Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás*, A. Dennis et al. (eds. and trans.) (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1980), pp. 230–231.

collude with individuals who remained within the community. Furthermore, a specific provision exists within *Grágás* regarding *bereserksgangr*, it appears under a sub-section dealing with punishments for residual pagan activities such as the worship heathen beings, and the use of witchcraft and sorcery and states that

If a man falls into a berserk frenzy, the penalty is lesser outlawry, and the same penalty applies to the men who are present unless they restrain him—then they are liable to no penalty if they succeed in restraining him. But if it happens again, the penalty is lesser outlawry.¹⁸²

Lesser outlawry (*forbaugsgarðr*) was a sentence of three years' banishment from the country, further suggesting that *berserkr* warriors and their companions, like Icelandic raiders and indeed the Irish *fian*, might be exiled and legally removed from their kin group and community. Moreover, *berserksgangr* like the practice of *díberg* was clearly associated with pagan and magical practices which were deemed unacceptable (but were nonetheless still practised by certain elements) within Christianised Icelandic society. *Berserkr* warriors therefore clearly display a number of traits that are closely comparable to those of their 'Celtic' counterparts; i.e. placing a high value on prowess and strength; indiscriminate violence, plunder, abduction and rape; semi-nakedness and/or distinctive dress or adornments; an association with marginal locations and the natural world; canine/ursine symbolism and ritualistic pre-Christian behaviour.

Let us turn now to the evidence from another Germanic society; that of Anglo-Saxon England. The eighth-century poem *Beowulf* clearly paints a picture of a world in which progression to warrior status, the practise of violence and the camaraderie of the warrior fraternity were extremely significant for male identity.¹⁸³ Indeed, the hero's name, a probable conflation of bear and wolf, clearly associates this mythical hero with martial animal characteristics of strength and cunning comparable to the Irish hero Chú Chulainn. *Beowulf* displays many of the attributes of the Norse berserker. For example, he is said to possess the strength of thirty men, he slays the champion Dæghrefn with a bear hug and he scorns the use of weapons in his conflict with Grendel.¹⁸⁴ The hero also undertakes various initiation feats to prove himself as a

¹⁸² Ibid., pp. 39, 162.

¹⁸³ *Beowulf*, pp. 1–27.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 9–10.

warrior. As a boy he competes with a rival in a lengthy and dangerous swimming competition. Following this he journeys away from his own country with a small warrior fraternity and defeats the supernatural enemies of the king of Denmark, thereby winning a great hoard of treasure. Upon returning to his own community he is rewarded with land and an inheritance and accepted by older warriors who had previously considered him “to be slothful, a feeble prince.”¹⁸⁵ Later, as an ageing king, he facilitates the induction of another young champion, Wiglaf, into the rigours of conflict.¹⁸⁶

Like Finn, Beowulf’s conflicts predominantly occur in liminal wilderness regions and against super-natural foes. For example, he slays sea-monsters during his ocean going competition with Breca, he defeats Grendel’s mother at the bottom of a dark lake and his fight with the dragon occurs by an ancient barrow near the water’s edge.¹⁸⁷ Yet despite contextual similarities Beowulf is different in character from the warriors of the *flan*, indeed, he is a figure who remains very much within the community. His character exemplifies model warrior behaviour and he does not attempt to contradict social norms. Rather, he is portrayed as the protector and saviour of the people and as a loyal servant of earthly kings. He is described in the following manner:

...a man well known for battles, for great deeds, displayed his bravery, acted with honour; never did he slay the companions of his hearth when drunk; his heart was not savage but, brave in battle, with the greatest strength among mankind, he held the ample gift which God had bestowed on him.¹⁸⁸

Beowulf is, therefore, depicted as a Christian warrior on the side of good who frequently receives God’s aid or protection.¹⁸⁹ Such a portrayal clearly indicates the Christian authorship of the poem. Like his Irish counterparts, the author of Beowulf was undoubtedly drawing

¹⁸⁵ “...swyð wendon, þæt he sleac wære, æðeling unfrom.” Ibid., lines 2187–2188, pp. 138–139.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., lines 2602–2820, pp. 159–169.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., lines 548–558, pp. 60–61, lines 1474–1556, pp. 105–109, lines 2516–2579, pp. 154–157.

¹⁸⁸ “...guma guðum cuð, godum dædum, dreah æfter dome; nealles druncne slog heorðgeneatas; næs him hreoh sefa, ac he mancynnes mæste cræfte, ginfæstan gife, þe him Gode sealde, heold hildedeor.” Ibid., lines 2178–2183, pp. 138–139.

¹⁸⁹ For example, the poet remarked that when Beowulf fought Grendel’s mother “...holy God brought about victory in battle.” (“...and halig God gerweold wigsigor.”) Ibid., lines 1553–1554, pp. 108–109.

his material from pagan oral traditions. Yet, he was also attempting to forge a new role for the warrior fraternity that would be acceptable to Christian sensibilities. This is clearly revealed by the use of thesis and antithesis during Beowulf's conflict with Grendel.

Grendel is depicted as a half-human monster, a fusion of man and beast. Grendel's anti-social nature is emphasised by his descent from Cain, the first murderer, who gave rise to all the "evil broods" (*ealle onwocon*).¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, he occupies liminal regions in the "wolf haunted slopes, windswept crags" and "dangerous swamp tracks".¹⁹¹ "A notorious prowler of the borderland" (*mære mearcstapa*) Grendel begins to raid the hall of Heorot after a poet there who sings about the miracle of God's creation angers him.¹⁹² A fearsome warrior; Grendel is attracted by treasure and plunder and continually attacks the hall by night, abducting young warriors and consuming their blood.¹⁹³ The poet relates that he

...felt no remorse...would not withdraw his deadly hostility, or pay compensation: nor need any of the counsellors there expect a handsome reparation at the killer's hands.¹⁹⁴

It would seem, then, that Grendel symbolically represented the malevolent side of the warrior. The side associated with mindless violence, plunder and abduction, animal ferocity, wilderness locations, paganism and lack of kinship responsibility. He was, therefore, the antithesis of Beowulf who represented a new order of honourable Christian warriors who were supposed faithfully to serve their kings. It is extremely significant that Grendel is the only supernatural foe whom Beowulf does not fight in a wilderness location. The conflict between these two great warriors takes place at the very heart of the community in the king's feasting hall. This location may seem less surprising if we consider that this was a location where the differing sides of the warrior's character were often been revealed after heavy drinking bouts. Through his portrayal of this conflict the poet was seeking to accommodate a

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., lines 110–115, pp. 37–38.

¹⁹¹ "*Hie dygel lond warigeað, wulfhleopu, windige næssan, frecne fengelad, ðær fyrgenstream under næssa genipu niþer gewited, flod under foldan.*" Ibid., lines 1357–1361, pp. 98–99.

¹⁹² Ibid., lines 86–115, pp. 38–39.

¹⁹³ Ibid., lines 115–125, pp. 38–39.

¹⁹⁴ "...*morðbeala mære and no mearn fore, fæhðe and fyrene; wæs to fæst on þam...feorhbealo feorran, fea þingian; ne þær nænig witenan þorfe beorhtre bote to banan folmum.*" Ibid., lines 136–137, 156–158, pp. 40–41.

Christian role for the warrior fraternity. He, therefore, condemned the activities of 'fian-type' groups and attempted to construct a new niche for the youthful warrior that was firmly under the controlling authority of kingship. This is symbolically indicated within the poem as when Beowulf had defeated both Grendel and his mother the hero took an ancient sword from their lair and thereafter "it passed into the power of the best of earthly kings."¹⁹⁵

The good and bad aspects of the warrior's character represented by the poet of *Beowulf* are strongly analogous with the warrior characterisations represented in Irish and Welsh mythology. It is true that characters such as Efnisien and Finn were, to some extent, more anti-authoritarian and, perhaps, malevolent than Beowulf. Yet, if we were to amalgamate the characters of Beowulf and Grendel then we would probably see a more realistic portrayal of the Anglo-Saxon warrior initiate. The poet of *Beowulf* deliberately portrayed the Anglo-Saxon hero as the ultimate ideal of a warrior. Indeed, this need to emphasise a noble role for the warrior in Christian society strongly suggests that unstable warrior fraternities were prevalent within eighth-century English society. The Anglo-Saxon law codes certainly suggest that this was the case. For example, the late seventh-century *Law of Ine* (king of Wessex 688–725) differentiated between the sizes of brigand warrior bands in the following way:

We use the term thieves if the number of men does not exceed seven, band of marauders for a number between seven and thirty five. Anything beyond this is a war band.¹⁹⁶

According to Ine's law codes any man belonging to a raiding party was required to clear himself by an oath equal to his *wergeld* (honour price).¹⁹⁷ This suggests that warriors involved in large scale raiding activities would have remained the responsibility of their kindred. Paradoxically, a member of a marauding band appears to have been outside the system of *wergeld* payments although he was required to pay a fine for joining such a disruptive group.¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, Ine's legislator clearly felt that thieves should be completely outside of the

¹⁹⁵ "...on gewewald gehwearf woroldcyniga..." Ibid., line 1684, pp. 114–115.

¹⁹⁶ "Deofas we hatað oð vii men; from vii hloð oð xxxv; siððan bið here." *Ine 13.1, Die Gesetze*, p. 94, translation modified from *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, F.L. Attenborough (ed. and trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), pp. 40–41.

¹⁹⁷ *Ine 15, Die Gesetze*, p. 96.

¹⁹⁸ *Ine 14, ibid.*, p. 94.

sphere of kinship responsibility.¹⁹⁹ Yet, in spite of the social exclusion of the brigand-warrior an attempt does appear to have been made by the ninth-century compiler of the *Laws of Alfred* (871–899) to draw such marauding bands away from the margins of society. For example, *Alfred 26* states:

If one of a band of marauders slays an unoffending man whose *wergeld* is 200 shillings, he who acknowledges the blow shall pay the *wergeld* and the fine; and everyone engaged in the affair shall pay 30 shillings compensation for belonging to such a band.²⁰⁰

Alfred was clearly attempting to curb the insular lawlessness that had been facilitated by the political and social instability of the early years of his reign. Nevertheless, such fines must have been particularly difficult to impose without the aid of a substantial military force. Indeed, this is made clear by a dictum from the tenth-century *Law of Æthelstan* (924–939) which note that the officials of each hundred were obliged to pledge that if any band

...whether nobles or commoners within or beyond the borders of our district—become so strong and powerful as to prevent us from exercising our legal rights, and stand up in defence of a thief, we shall ride out against them in full force...²⁰¹

As we have seen from the Welsh, Scottish and Irish evidence, such war bands were notoriously difficult to control. Despite their marginal status some war bands undoubtedly received a degree of support from their local communities.²⁰² It must have often been impossible to differentiate

¹⁹⁹ *Ine 16* and *21*, *ibid.*, pp. 96–98.

²⁰⁰ “[*Be twyhyndum men æt hlōðslihte.*] *Gif mon twyhyndne mon unsynnigne mid hlōðe ofslea, gielde se ðæs sleges andetta sie wer 7 wite; 7 æghwælc mon ðe on siðe wære geselle xxx scill. to hlōðbote.*” *Alfred 29**, *ibid.*, p. 64.

²⁰¹ “...7 gif þonne þæt gebyrige þæt ænig mægð to þan strang sy and to þam mycel, innon landes oððe uton landes, xii hynde oðð twyhynde, þæt us ures rihtes wyrcen 7 þone þeof foren forstande, þæt we ridan be eallum mannum tō mid þam gerefan þe hit on his mōnunge sy.” *Æthelstan VI*, 8.2, *ibid.*, p. 178.

²⁰² This is suggested within the late tenth-century laws of Æthelred II that state: “If a man robs another in daylight, and the latter makes the deed known in three villages he shall not be entitled to protection of any kind.” (“*And se þe reafað man leohtan dæge 7 he hit kyþe to þrim tūnan, þæt he ne nanes fryðes weorðe.*”) *Æthelred IV*, 15, *ibid.*, p. 232. The clear implication here is that marauders might expect to be sheltered and aided by their local villagers. This is further reinforced by a code that states “...everyone who is an outlaw in one district shall be an outlaw everywhere.” (“...7 ælc flyma beo flyma on ælcum lande þe on anum sy.”) *Æthelred III*, 10, *ibid.*, p. 230. Despite this the mid-tenth century *Laws of Edmund* make it clear that brigands and malefactors should remain

between the actions of brigands and murderers and those of the war bands of powerful individuals. This was made clear by the reforming archbishop, Wulfstan of York (d. 1023) who complained about the violence that was plaguing English society at the beginning of the eleventh century. In his *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (The Sermon of Wolf to the English) the prelate bemoaned the fact that

Here (i.e. within English society) are slayers of men and slayers of kinsmen and killers of priests and enemies of the monasteries; and here are perjurers and murderers...and those who kill children...and here are plunderers and robbers and those who despoil...²⁰³

The Anglo Saxon Chronicle reveals that when powerful men were exiled or outlawed they invariably conducted activities of violent rapine from marginal wilderness locations. For example, the chronicler notes that following his exile in 1044 the Danish born nobleman Osgod Clapa returned to ravage the coastline of Essex in 1049.²⁰⁴ In the following year Swein Godwineson, who appears to have been exiled for his abduction of the Abbess of Leominster in 1046, returned to the south coast of England with a fleet of eight ships and abducted and murdered his cousin Earl Beorn.²⁰⁵ When Swein's brother, Harold Godwineson, was exiled several years later he ravaged the coastal districts of the Severn estuary with his war band.²⁰⁶ Furthermore, Earl Ælfgar of Mercia was outlawed in 1055 and following this he allied his forces with a Welsh

firmlly outside the systems of *wergeld* and kinship responsibility, *Edmund II, 1.1–3*, *ibid.*, pp. 186–188.

²⁰³ “*Her syndan mannsлагan 7 mægslagan 7 mæsserbanan 7 mynsterhatan; 7 her syndan mán-sworan 7 morþorwyrhtan; her syndan myllestean 7 bearnmyrðran 7 fule folegene horingas manege; 7 her syndan wiccan 7 wælcynan; 7 her syndan ryperas 7 reaferas 7 woroldstruderan...*” *SLAA*, pp. 64–65 translation from Swanton *ASP*, p. 121. It could be argued that Wulfstan's complaints were directed against Scandinavian violence. Yet, this tract, which was composed around the turn of the eleventh century, was intended to chastise the English people for their sinfulness. It was against his own population that Wulfstan was aiming these complaints.

²⁰⁴ Osgod Clapa (d. 1054) had been a powerful thegn in Cnut's regime. He was probably exiled for his opposition to Edward the Confessor's accession to the throne of England in 1042. See, Swanton, *ASC, C*, pp. 164, 168–169.

²⁰⁵ Following Swein's exile Earl Beorn received many of his cousin's lands from Edward the Confessor. This was, therefore, a vindictive and vengeful murder, *ASC, D*, pp. 169–170. Frank Barlow described Swein as a “wild man” who “went his own turbulent way.” *The Godwins* (Harlow: Longman, 2002), pp. 38–39.

²⁰⁶ *ASC, E* and *D*, pp. 178–179. The chronicle notes that Harold was resisted by the local population who opposed him as they would have done any outlaw. His war band subsequently killed thirty good thegns, put the people to the sword and almost certainly led others away into slavery, see chapter 4.

war band and plundered the town of Hereford.²⁰⁷ Similarly, in 1067 an individual named Eadric the Wild attacked the Norman garrison at Hereford with the aid of a Welsh force and inflicted heavy losses.²⁰⁸ Eadric was the nephew of Eadric Streona, who had been the powerful ealdorman of Mercia during King Æthelred's reign. He appears to have held substantial lands in Herefordshire and the Welsh marches prior to the Conquest.²⁰⁹ Eadric refused to surrender to Norman rule following the English defeat at Hastings.²¹⁰ As a consequence, Norman troops under the command Richard fitz Scrob ravaged his lands from their garrison in Hereford. Eadric fought back and inflicted great losses upon the Normans.²¹¹ The twelfth-century commentator Orderic Vitalis noted that Eadric attacked the Norman garrison at Shrewsbury along with the men of Chester and "other untameable Englishmen" (*ferocibus Anglis*).²¹² Interestingly, Orderic identified Eadric to be a member of the fierce *silvatici*. These were bands of Englishmen who put up stiff resistance against the new Norman regime following the Conquest. They conducted themselves with the traditional ferocity of the Anglo-Saxon warrior and operated from wilderness bases, refusing to live within houses lest they became soft.²¹³ In many ways then, the *silvatici* would appear to have resembled Irish *fian* groups or the warbands of youthful *ynfydion* that were operating from wilderness locations in Wales. The *Abingdon Chronicle* reported that following the Conquest Englishmen from all ranks of society were lurking in the woods and on islands and plundering those who came their way.²¹⁴ These groups have been viewed as part of a wide network of political resistance towards Norman rule

²⁰⁷ *ASC C* and *D*, pp. 186–187. Ælfgar also attacked the minster at Hereford and led many of the city's occupants away into slavery.

²⁰⁸ *ASC D*, p. 200. The chronicle refers to him as Eadric Cild, however, Plummer and Earle feel that Cild is a scribal error and should read 'Se Wilda', see *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, C. Plummer and J. Earle (eds.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972 originally published 1899), vol. i, p. 200, vol. ii, p. 259. This contention has received more recent support from Susan Reynolds see "Eadric *Silvaticus* and the English Resistance", *BIHR*, 54, 1981, pp. 102–105, 102.

²⁰⁹ Reynolds, "Eadric", pp. 102–105.

²¹⁰ See *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, P. McGurk (ed. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), vol. iii, pp. 4–5.

²¹¹ *ASC, D*, p. 200, Reynolds, "Eadric", pp. 102–105.

²¹² Orderic also described Eadric as "powerful and warlike" (*potenti et bellicose*) and notes that Eadric was accompanied a Welsh warrior contingent, *OV*, vol. ii, pp. 228–229.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 216–219, see also Reynolds, "Eadric", pp. 102–105.

²¹⁴ *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, 2 vols, J. Stevenson (ed.) (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1858), vol. i, pp. 485–486.

but this was not simply a political movement. There was little other recourse for individuals who had lost their status other than to take to a transitional life of plunder in the wilderness. Eadric's nickname, *se wilda* 'the wild', appears strongly analogous to the names attributed to fictional individuals who existed within the warrior fraternities of the Irish tales, the *Mabinogion* or *Beowulf*. That Eadric came to be associated closely with the survival of Anglo-Saxon cultural and ethnic identity should be no surprise. In many warrior societies identity was established and perpetuated through acts of violence. Indeed, Eadric and the other *silvatici* were opposed to the drastic cultural changes brought about by the Conquest and they expressed their opposition in a traditional manner.

Hereward the Wake, a contemporary of Eadric the Wild, also appears to have been regarded as a guardian of Anglo-Saxon cultural identity in the immediate post-Conquest period. Like Eadric, Hereward and his war band practised guerrilla style warfare against the Normans from the marshy regions of the Cambridgeshire Fens. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* ambiguously portrays Hereward as both a violent plunderer of monasteries and as a courageous and defiant leader.²¹⁵ This portrayal aptly reflects both the benevolent and malevolent sides of the warrior's character. A detailed account of Hereward's life exists in the *Gesta Herewardi Saxonis*, which was composed during the first half of the twelfth century. Many of the events within the *Gesta* appear to have been fabricated; however, it does provide us with some illuminating details about early twelfth-century perceptions regarding the likely fate of such a warrior.²¹⁶

The author relates that as a youth Hereward was a quarrelsome individual who was

... tough in work and rough in play, readily provoking fights among those of his own age and often stirring up strife among his elders in town and village.²¹⁷

²¹⁵ *ASC*, E, pp. 205, 208.

²¹⁶ See H. Thomas, "The Gesta Herewardi", *ANS*, xxi, 1998, for a full discussion on the dating of this tale, pp. 214–232.

²¹⁷ "...sed crudelis in opere, et in ludo severus libenter inter coetaneos commovens bella, et inter majores etate in urbibus et in villis saepe suscitans certamina..." *Gesta Herewardi* in *L'Estoire des Engles solum la Translacion Maistre Geffrei Gaimar*, T.D. Hardy and C.T. Martin (eds.) (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1888), vol. i, pp. 339–404, 342. Translation from *Three lives of the Last Englishmen*, M. Swanton (ed. and trans.) (New York/London: Garland, 1984), p. 47.

The author of the *Gesta* felt that Hereward had

...spared nobody whom he thought to be in any way a rival in courage or in fighting. In consequence he often caused strife among the populace and commotion among the common people.²¹⁸

Hereward's behaviour, therefore, exemplified the kind of riotous behaviour that we have come to expect from a warrior initiate. The author notes that shortly after Hereward had turned seventeen he was expelled from his family home and went into exile on the continent.²¹⁹ He did not return until after the Norman Conquest when he found that his lands had been confiscated and that he had lost his status. He subsequently formed an egalitarian war band and pursued a violent vendetta against those Normans who had usurped his patrimony and killed his brother.²²⁰ Hereward's war band are portrayed living a life of plunder and conducting a long standing insurgency against the Norman forces. Indeed, the author of the *Gesta* deliberately depicted Hereward's band as members of a fraternity who were striving to retain their cultural identity through violent war-like behaviour. Moreover, Thomas argues persuasively that this post-Conquest author was writing with a specific purpose; he was attempting to reassert the fighting prowess (and therefore the warrior manhood) of the Anglo-Saxon people.²²¹

It appears likely that conservative Old English warrior fraternities continued to create problems for their new French speaking overlords for decades after the Norman Conquest. The Welsh chronicle the *Brut y Tywysogyon* noted that in 1109 a band of 'Saxon' warriors were ravaging the Marcher territories of South Wales in a similar manner to Eadric the Wild.²²² Interestingly, these warriors appear to have formed an accord with a like-minded Welsh war band in an inter-ethnic alliance closely analogous to the one that had been struck between the exiled Earl Ælfgar of Mercia and a band of Welsh warriors in 1055 or, indeed,

²¹⁸ "...interdum nemini parcebat quem vel in fortitudine aliquantum rebellem suae virtuti cognoscebat seu in certamine. Propterea quidem et hiis etiam de causis sepiissime seditionem faciebat in populo et tumultum in plebe." *GH*, p. 342 and *TLL*, p. 47.

²¹⁹ *TLL*, pp. 47, 61.

²²⁰ The author felt that Hereward personally decapitated fourteen Normans and he placed their heads above the gates of his father's residence, *ibid.*, pp. 64–64.

²²¹ Thomas, "Hereward", pp. 227–232. Roffe voices a similar opinion on the text in "Hereward 'The Wake' and the Barony of Bourne: A Reassessment of a Fenland Legend", *LHA*, xxix, 1994, pp. 7–10.

²²² *ByT*, pp. 62–63, see also H. Thomas, *The English and the Normans: Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation and Identity 1066–c. 1220* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 63.

between the warrior bands of the British leader Ingcél Cáech and the Irish *fian* in Irish tale *Tógail Bruidne Da Derga* discussed earlier.²²³

Violence, gender identity, ethnic identity and political cohesion were intrinsically linked with the warrior fraternities of medieval Britain and Ireland. The initiation rituals of these fraternities symbolized a break with the female centred world of childhood and a rebirth into the male-orientated communities in which the individual would fight, hunt, lead, follow, worship and play.²²⁴ The ritualistic nature of such groups made them intensively conservative.²²⁵ Members of the warrior fraternity were frequently attributed supernatural powers because they stood guard on the boundary between the human world and the unknown 'otherworld' of the wilderness. Yet, in spite of the apparently marginal nature of these fraternities they continually interacted with and preyed upon their host communities. As a result, they frequently crossed the cultural boundaries that separated them from mainstream society. Indeed, it is possible that these volatile groups only assembled on occasions when an assertion of collective identity (and masculinity) was required. The warrior fraternities, thereby, acted as the rampart of the community. Such groups would attempt to preserve long standing institutions associated with ethnic identity and warrior power furthermore they resisted cultural change at any cost. Any threat posed to the community, whether by an internal contravention of traditional norms or by an infiltration of external cultural influences, would result in the flaring up of ritual violence.²²⁶ Only through such violence could men be made into men and progress through their life cycle or die honourably as adult warriors.

Abduction, Honour and Virilization

I have already touched on the fact that violent sexual domination and female abduction were significant activities for the process of warrior virilization. In order to illustrate this point I will now briefly digress and examine the closely analogous Germanic societies of medieval Scandinavia. The strong cultural and linguistic ties that existed between

²²³ The significance of this alliance will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5.

²²⁴ Tiger, *Men*, p. 136.

²²⁵ Tiger, *Men*, pp. 133–135.

²²⁶ The term 'ritual violence' is used here in reference to the violent rapine and plundering activities conducted by ritualistic warrior fraternities such as the *fian*.

the society of Anglo-Saxon England and those of medieval Denmark, Norway and Iceland further justify this digression. The Old Norse material therefore provides a particularly incisive parallel on which to base our analysis. Social and cultural affinities clearly existed between all the communities of medieval Britain and their Scandinavian counterparts. The significant cultural impact of the Scandinavian settlement upon these British cultures further validates this comparison.

As I have previously alluded, the saga material does not provide us with a historically reliable picture of the behaviour and attitudes of warriors in medieval Scandinavian society. Many of the accounts extant in the Old Norse sagas relate to activities that had taken place several hundred years before the saga *literati* committed their stories to parchment. Nevertheless, the Old Norse literature does provide us with an insight into the 'conceptual universe' of the society in which it was formulated and highlights the 'underlying tensions' that were at play in that society.²²⁷ In addition, the slightly more reliable Old Norse law codes have a great deal to say about rape and violence towards women.²²⁸

The twelfth- and thirteenth-century sagas portray a society that was particularly troubled by uncontrollable sexual violence.²²⁹ This is expressed in the Old Norse literature through the topos of 'the illicit love visit'.²³⁰ In this topos a youthful male, very often a *berserkr* warrior, forces himself upon or abducts a free woman in opposition to her family's wishes.²³¹ Such actions often resulted in violence and feud with the female's guardians and almost always lead to the eventual the expulsion or death of the unwanted 'suitor'.²³² Yet, the fate allocated to such figures within the sagas appears to be more indicative of the Christian authors' disapproval of such aggressive sexual tendencies rather than a reflection of the reality of medieval Scandinavian society. The depiction of the assailant as a *berserkr* reveals that such actions were strongly associated with youthful male initiates with pagan

²²⁷ C. Clover, "Maiden Warriors and Other Sons", *JEGP*, 85, January, 1986, pp. 35–49, 36 and P. Meulengracht Sørensen, *The Unmanly Man, Concepts of Sexual Defamation in Early Northern Society* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1983), p. 12.

²²⁸ J. Jochens, "The Illicit Love Visit: An Archaeology of Old Norse Sexuality", *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 1, 1991b, pp. 357–392, 359.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 360.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 359–364, see also B. Blaney, "The Berserk Suitor", pp. 279–284.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² Jochens, "Illicit Love", p. 364.

affiliations.²³³ The ‘illicit love visit’ topos is relatively common, occurring more than twenty times in fifteen sagas. This, in turn, reveals that the saga authors considered such instances to be a serious problem within Norse society.²³⁴ The vehement antipathy expressed by these Christian writers toward such activities, therefore, suggests that long standing practices of female abduction and bride theft were still occurring in twelfth and thirteenth-century Scandinavia.²³⁵

Jochens has argued that the peculiarly late Christianisation of the Scandinavian communities was the primary reason for the continuing existence of these behavioural traits. She feels that the long-standing influence of Christianity had eradicated similar behaviour within the other societies of Western Europe.²³⁶ However, as we have seen, male warrior fraternities practising ritualistic brigandage also continued to exist within the societies of medieval Britain. Indeed, there were strong cultural affinities between the warrior fraternities of Britain and those extant in medieval Scandinavian societies.

Events analogous to the ‘illicit love visits’ are clearly discernible within the poetry and literature of Anglo-Saxon society. In the Old English poem generally referred to as *Wulf and Eadwacer* a female narrator, who is under the male guardianship of *Eadwacer* (meaning ‘watchful of wealth or happiness’), longs for an illicit visit from her lover, the hunted outlaw *Wulf*.²³⁷ This poem appears in a late tenth-century/early eleventh-century manuscript. The date of its composition is uncertain although Krapp and Dobbie suggest it has an eighth-century origin.²³⁸

²³³ Ibid., p. 368, also Blaney, “Berserk”, p. 279. It also indicates that brute physical strength and reckless daring were associated with such behaviour.

²³⁴ Jochens, “Illicit Love”, p. 364. David Dumville provides evidence from certain insular hagiographical tracts for similar viking abductions in the Irish Sea region, see D. Dumville, “Images of the Viking in Eleventh-Century Latin Literature” in M.W. Herren et al. (eds.), *Latin Culture in the Eleventh Century*, vol. i (Turnhout: Brepolis, 2002), pp. 250–263, 254–258.

²³⁵ *Herfang* or the taking of women in warfare was prohibited by the Church as late as 1176, *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, J. Sigarðsson et al. (eds.) (Copenhagen, Kaupmannahöfn 1857), 5 Volumes, vol. i, p. 234, *Norges gamle love*, R. Keyser and P.A. Munch (eds.) (Christiania, 1846–95), 5 Volumes, vol. i, p. 409.

²³⁶ J. Jochens, “The Church and Sexuality in Medieval Iceland”, *JMH*, 6, no. 4, December, 1980, pp. 377–392, also J. Jochens, “The Politics of Reproduction: Medieval Norwegian Kingship”, *AHR*, 92, no. 2, April, 1987, pp. 327–350, 349.

²³⁷ *The Exeter book*, G.P. Krapp and E.V.K. Dobbie (eds.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), pp. liv–lvii translation from *The Anglo-Saxon World, An Anthology*, K. Crossley-Holland (ed. and trans.) (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 59.

²³⁸ Ibid.

There has been a great deal of interpretative debate concerning this poem. Henry Bradley expounded the traditionally accepted interpretation in the nineteenth century. He felt that the narrator was a captive female residing in a foreign land with her tyrant husband and captor, *Eadwacer*, and that *Wulf* was her outlawed lover.²³⁹ Paradoxically, Hamer believes that the female narrator was made pregnant by an assailant, nick-named *Wulf*, during a daring raid on her community. Her kin were, therefore, dishonoured by this pregnancy and desired revenge against this marauder. Hamer feels that *Eadwacer* was not the name of the woman's guardian but, in fact, the real name of her lover; *Wulf*.²⁴⁰ Baker generally agrees with this interpretation, but argues that it is more likely that *Wulf* was the woman's outlawed husband and *Eadwacer* her jailer or captor.²⁴¹ In addition, Osborn has argued that the female narrator was the mother of *Wulf* who was suffering because of her adolescent son's wild and aberrant ways. She, therefore, complained to her husband, *Eadwacer*, that their son was leading his younger brother away to the wilderness to join in with his mayhem.²⁴² Despite the diversity of these interpretations all of them uphold the general theme of the 'illicit love visit'.²⁴³ Furthermore, in *Beowulf*, Hrothgar's fair queen is named *Wealhþeow* a name that strongly suggests that she had been a victim of an abduction or bride theft. '*Wealh*' denoted 'a foreigner' or 'an outsider' but could also be used to denote 'a slave' or 'a servant' in Old English whilst '*þeow*' carried the clear meaning of 'a slave'.²⁴⁴ An eighth-century riddle from the *Book of Exeter* discusses the lascivious

²³⁹ See H. Morley, "Review of English Writers: An Attempt towards a History of English Literature", *Academy*, xxxiii, 1888, p. 198.

²⁴⁰ *A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse*, R. Hamer (ed. and trans.) (London: Faber and Faber, 1972).

²⁴¹ P.S. Baker, "The Ambiguity of Wulf and Eadwacer", *Studies in Philology*, vol. 78, no. 5, 1981, pp. 39–51, 49–51.

²⁴² M. Osborn, "The Text and Context of Wulf and Eadwacer" in M. Green (ed.), *The Old English Elegies* (Rutherford N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press/London: Associated University Presses, 1983), pp. 174–190, 184–188.

²⁴³ See also Davidson, "Training", p. 15.

²⁴⁴ Scholars have regarded this appellation to be both troubling and problematic arguing that it is incongruous with *Wealhþeow's* role and status within the poem. Yet, within the context of the current discussion *Wealhþeow's* name is perhaps less surprising. See M.J. Enright, *Lady with a Mead Cup: Ritual, Prophecy and Lordship in the European Warband from La Tène to the Viking Age* (Dublin/Portland: Four Courts Press, 1996), pp. 189–195, H. Damico, *Beowulf's Wealtheow and the Valkyrie Tradition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), p. 58, J. Bosworth and T.N. Toller (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 1053, 1173.

nature of a lowly Welsh female slave revealing that more humble women might also be abducted and sexually exploited.²⁴⁵

Other non-literary sources also suggest that rape and female abductions were intimately associated with the activities of the warrior fraternities of Anglo-Saxon England. For example, the late seventh-century Anglo Saxon *Penitential of Theodore* issued a series of judgements regarding the dissolution of marriage as a result of the abduction of a man's wife at the hand of his enemies.²⁴⁶ Instances of rape and abduction appear to have been a serious concern for legislators throughout the Anglo-Saxon period.²⁴⁷ For example, the late ninth-century laws of Alfred the Great legislated against the sexual abuse of young women and also prohibited the abduction and rape of holy women.²⁴⁸ Similarly, the early eleventh-century *Laws of Cnut* state that any man who raped (*nydnæme*) a widow or maiden would forfeit his *wergeld*.²⁴⁹

There is also evidence for high-level female abductions within the annals of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle D* notes

²⁴⁵ See *Riddle 12, EB*, lines 7–12, p. 186. The riddles extant within the *Exeter Book* cannot be securely dated although Dobbie and Krapp suggest that they were probably composed during the eighth century.

²⁴⁶ Theodore of Tarsus was archbishop of Canterbury from 668–690, although this penitential does not profess to have been written by his hand. It was probably composed sometime after his death during the eighth century and was extremely influential as it appears in numerous manuscripts across the continent. The version used here is extant in a ninth-century manuscript, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance. A Translation of the Principle Libri Poenitentiales and Selections from Related Documents*, J.T. McNeill and H.M. Gamer (eds. and trans.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 210. The penitentials were largely concerned with sexual behaviour; indeed, as Pierre Payer put it “For 500 years the penitential literature continued to be the principal agent in the formation and transmission of a code of sexual morality” cited in J. E. Salisbury, “Bestiality in the Middle Ages” in J.E. Salisbury (ed.), *Sex in the Middle Ages* (New York: Garland, 1991), pp. 173–187, 176. Despite this, successive editions of penitentials consistently condemn female abduction and rape suggesting that such unChristian sexual behaviour may have been difficult to eradicate. The early seventh-century *Laws of Aethelberht* stipulated that compensation was due to the male guardian of any maiden or betrothed woman who had been forcibly abducted by another man *Laws of Aethelberht* 82–5, *Die Gesetze*, p. 8.

²⁴⁷ See J. Coleman, “Rape in Anglo-Saxon England” in G. Halsall (ed.), *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1998), pp. 193–203. C. Hough, “Alfred’s *Domboc* and the Language of Rape: A Reconsideration of Alfred Ch. 11”, *Medium Ævum*, vol. lxvi, 1, 1997, pp. 1–27.

²⁴⁸ *Laws of Alfred* 8, *ibid.*, p. 54. The laws also legislated against sexual harassment such as the touching of a woman’s breast.

²⁴⁹ *Cnut II*, 52, 52.1, *ibid.*, p. 346. Similarly, the early twelfth-century *Laws of Henry I* stated that rape and abduction were serious crimes that were in direct breach of the king’s peace, *Leges Henrici Primi* 10.1, *ibid.*, p. 556 see also L.J. Downer (ed. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 109.

that when Edward the Elder (899–924) took the throne in 899 a conflict soon arose between the new king and his cousin, Æthelwold. Æthelwold appears to have been unwilling to accept Edward's authority and he seized the manors of Wimborne and Twinham without the king's permission. He further emphasised these rebellious actions by also abducting an unnamed noblewoman. King Edward subsequently blockaded the two contended manors, but Æthelwold managed to escape by night and link up with an army in Northumbria. Following this the Chronicler notes that Æthelwold and his allies

...rode after the woman whom he (Æthelwold) had earlier taken without the king's leave, and against the command of the bishops because she was earlier consecrated a nun.²⁵⁰

Æthelwold was subsequently slain in 905 during a hard fought battle somewhere in the east of England.²⁵¹ Nevertheless, the chronicler clearly regarded the abduction of one of Edward's brides of Christ to be a significant factor in this power struggle. Indeed, his account suggests that female abduction might constitute a politically motivated act at the very highest level of Anglo-Saxon society. Similarly, King Edgar (d. 975) was said to have taken the wife of a nobleman named Æthelwold by force following his coronation in 959.²⁵² The *Anglo Saxon Chronicle E* relates that in 1015, Edmund Ironside (d. 1016), son of the exiled monarch Æthelred II, raided a nunnery at Malmesbury and abducted the recently bereaved widow of Sigferth, earl of the north-east Midlands (d. 1015) "against the king's (i.e. Cnut's) will, and had her for wife."²⁵³ Shortly afterwards Edmund and his men rode northwards and seized all of Sigferth's territory.²⁵⁴ The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle C* notes that several decades later the wayward earl, Swein Godwineson, abducted

²⁵⁰ 'Pa bera<d>man þæt wif þe he hæfde ær genum<en> butan þæs cynges leafan, 7 ofer þæra biscopa gebodu, for þam heo wæs ær to nonnan gehalgod.', *ASC, MS D* (Cubbin), p. 36, translation from Swanton, *ASC*, p. 93.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

²⁵² *Willam of Malmesbury, Gesta Regum Anglorum*, R.A.B. Mynors et al. (eds. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), vol. i, pp. 256–259. See also *Brenhinedd y Saesson, The Kings of the Saxons*, T. Jones (ed. and trans.) (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1971), pp. 35, 39.

²⁵³ "7 ge nam þ wif ofer þæs cynges willan. Heafde him to wife." *ASC, E, TSCP*, p. 146, translation from Swanton, *ASC*, p. 146. See also *ASC C*, Swanton, p. 146, *GRA*, pp. 312–313 and Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum*, D. Greenway (ed. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 355.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

one Eadgyfu, Abbess of Leominster, following an assertive raid into mid Wales and he “kept her as long as it suited him” (“7 hæfde hi þa while þe him geliste”).²⁵⁵

It might be argued these women were merely taken as hostages; however, the sexual motivation behind a number of these abductions is relatively explicit.²⁵⁶ Furthermore, the abductors were predominantly young powerful men flexing their military muscles often in opposition to figures of male authority. The abduction and rape of abbesses and nuns not only symbolised territorial conquest, prowess and contempt for male guardianship, it also articulated hegemony over the religious world.²⁵⁷ Despite the wide ranging cultural changes instigated by centuries of Christian influence many Anglo-Saxon warriors continued to express their power and virility through these custom-old behavioural practices. The corruption of the brides of Christ might have thereby constituted an assertion of the traditional values of warrior prowess and a repudiation of the ascetic values of the Christian faith. This might be regarded as the ultimate defiance of male authority, in essence an attempt to dishonour/emasculate Christ.

An episode in the *Gesta Herewardi* suggests that problems of uncontrollable sexual violence similarly afflicted post-Conquest society. The *Gesta* relates that after Hereward had been exiled from his father's manor he resided with a Northumbrian noble named Gisebert. At this time the hero fought a great bear which had the head and feet of a man and which was able to understand human speech. This animal, which clearly symbolised a *berserkr*-style warrior, was said to have been fathered by another great bear that had raped a girl in the woods and impregnated

²⁵⁵ *ASC MS C*, 1046, p. 109, translation from Swanton, *ASC*, p. 164. This case of abduction appears to have resulted in Swein being exiled by Edward the Confessor, see Barlow, *Godwins*, pp. 38–39.

²⁵⁶ The laws of Alfred the Great suggest that nuns were particularly vulnerable to abduction and sexual abuse. For example, *Alfred 8* notes that if a nun became pregnant following her abduction her offspring could inherit her property. Similarly, *Alfred 18* legislated against any man who “...lustfully seizes a nun.” (“Gif hwa nunnan mid hamed þinge.”) *Die Gesetze*, pp. 54, 58.

²⁵⁷ M. Clunies Ross, “Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England”, *P&P*, 108, 1985, pp. 3–35, p. 31. The abduction of religious women was not limited to the British Isles. Wemple has noted that in early medieval France heavy fines were introduced for the abduction of nuns and also of slave girls who were committed to nunneries by their master, see S.F. Wemple, “Consent and Dissent to Sexual Intercourse in Germanic Societies from the Fifth to the Tenth Century” in A.E. Laiou (ed.), *Consent and Coercion to Sex and Marriage in Ancient and Medieval Societies* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1993), pp. 227–244, 240.

her with a future king of Norway.²⁵⁸ The author relates that this beast broke free from its chains and, whilst in a violent frenzy, tore to pieces anyone who approached it. Hereward subsequently encountered and defeated this 'beast' just as "it was proceeding to the lord's chamber where his wife and daughters and the women had fled in fright."²⁵⁹ The violent sexual intent of this quasi-human warrior seems relatively explicit. Indeed, this episode is strongly comparable with the 'illicit love visit' topos extant in the later Norse sagas. Furthermore, the appearance of this monstrous individual, like that of Grendel, may have been intentionally symbolic of the malevolent aspect of Hereward's own social group. Hereward, himself, is depicted as an extremely violent and, at times, liminal, character often dwelling in wilderness locations and indulging in sexual license and female abduction.²⁶⁰

Another twelfth-century writer Walter Map provides us with a similar anecdote concerning a late Anglo-Saxon warrior/outlaw. In Map's *De Nugis Curialium* (Courtier's Trifles) he recounts that the Anglo-Saxon rebel Eadric the Wild had violently abducted a beautiful maiden from an otherworldly dance of nymphs and following this he "took her with him, and for three days and nights used her as he would."²⁶¹ This is undoubtedly a fictional account; however, as we have seen Eadric the Wild was a historical figure and was closely associated with the Anglo-Saxon warrior fraternity. This tract, therefore, provides an interesting insight in to twelfth-century beliefs concerning the expected behaviour of such individuals. The author subsequently relates that Eadric married this captive female and presented her to William the Conqueror.²⁶²

²⁵⁸ *TLL*, pp. 47–48. Similarly, the Anglo-Saxon earl Siward of Northumbria (d. 1055) was said to have been the product of a union with a bear.

²⁵⁹ "*Herewardus feram cruentatam ad thalamum domini sui propter voces trepidantium revertentem, ubi uxor illius filiae ac mulieres timide confugerant, obvium habuit...*", *GH*, p. 344 translation from Swanton, *TLL*, p. 48.

²⁶⁰ Hereward is portrayed as a virile warrior who attracts female adulation, *TLL*, p. 48. He forms relationships with several women. In one incident he flirts heavily with the daughter of the Cornish prince, Alef, and defeats and kills a man named Ulcus Ferreus (literally meaning 'sore iron') to whom she is betrothed. See *TLL*, pp. 49–50, see also chapter 3. He subsequently participates in the abduction of this princess in order that she can illicitly marry the king of Ireland's son, *TLL*, pp. 51–52. Sometime later, whilst in Flanders, Hereward falls for the beautiful maiden, Turfrida, and marries her, *ibid.*, pp. 56–58. However, he subsequently leaves her and returns to England where he later marries the beautiful widow of the Earl Dolfin, though this act does receive some authorial disapproval, see *TLL*, pp. 83–84.

²⁶¹ "...*hanc secum tulit, et ea pro uoto tribus diebus et noctibus usus...*", *DNC*, p. 157.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 157–158. The woman in this story relates that Eadric had rescued her from the dead. Could this have been a concubine slave-girl whom Eadric had resurrected from social death?

Despite the slightly farcical nature of this account it is possible that it was an elaboration of an actual incidence of a female abduction that Walter had derived from courtly gossip. Indeed, the traditional Anglo-Saxon practice of *brydhlöp* might have appeared somewhat exotic and noteworthy to the twelfth-century sensibilities of that writer.

Examples of violent sexual behaviour are not confined to Anglo-Saxon society. The concerns of the Welsh laws indicate that rape and forcible abduction also created problems within medieval Welsh society. *The Law of Hywel Dda* passes various judgements concerning the clandestine abduction of both married and single women. In such an incident the woman could be deprived of her status making it unlikely that she would have voluntarily agreed to such an action.²⁶³ Legislation is also enacted regarding the status of the offspring of young women who have been raped by unknown male assailants.²⁶⁴ The association between such rapine and the youthful warrior fraternity is fleshed out within the tales of the *Mabinogion*. In *Culhwch ac Olwen* Cilydd son of Cyleddon Wledig needed a wife so he gathered his forces and slew king Doged "...and his [i.e. king Doged's] wife they brought home with them and an only daughter she had along with her..."²⁶⁵

Later the same story relates that

Creiddylad daughter of Lludd Silver-hand went with Gwythyr son of Greidawl; and before he had slept with her there came Gwyn son of Nudd and carried her off by force.²⁶⁶

Similarly, in *Math uab Mathonwy* (Math son of Mathonwy) two young warriors, Gwydion and Gilfaethwy, raped the favourite maiden of their uncle, king Math in an attempt to undermine his authority.²⁶⁷ The *Brut y Twysogyon* provides evidence that such incidents occurred at the highest levels of Welsh society. For example, in an entry for 1041 the *Brut* relates that, early in his career, the powerful king of Gwynedd, Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, defeated Hywel ab Edwin, king of Deheubarth, and assumed control of his kingdom. In order to underline this conquest,

²⁶³ *LHD*, pp. 49–51. See also Pryce, *Native Law*, p. 110.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²⁶⁵ "*A llad y brenhin a dwyn y wreic atref ganthu a orugant ac un uerch a oed idi gyd a hi.*" *CaO*, lines 31–33, p. 2 translation from Jones and Jones, *Mabinog*, p. 96.

²⁶⁶ "*Kyn no hynny ychdic yd aeth Creidylat uerch Lud Law Ereint gan Wythyr mab Greidawl, a chynn kyscu genthi dyuot Gwynn uab Nud a'e dwyn y treis.*" *CaO*, lines 988–990, p. 35, translation from Jones and Jones, *Mabinog*, p. 128.

²⁶⁷ *Mab.*, p. 50, see chapter 3.

Gruffudd then "...seized his [Hywel's] wife and took her as wife for himself."²⁶⁸ The *Brut* also relates in some detail the events surrounding the abduction and rape of Nest, wife of Gerald the castellan of Pembroke and mistress of Henry I, by the young Welsh prince Owain ap Cadwgan (d. 1116).²⁶⁹

The Irish sources suggest that similar patterns of youthful male behaviour were extant in medieval Irish society. Indeed, we have seen that the ability to hunt and capture individuals was an essential part of the *fian* warrior's rite of passage. One of the primary motivations for raiding in the early Irish tale *Táin bó Cúalnge* appears to have been the capture of women.²⁷⁰ Similarly, female abductions and rapes frequently occur within the corpus of Fenian literature. Even the mythical hero of the *fian*, Finn, was said to have been the product of a sexual union with an abducted woman.²⁷¹ Furthermore, in the twelfth-century hagiographical text *Mo-ling and Grác* a flirtatious woman named Crón was gang-raped by twelve brigands practising *díberg* as a punishment for tempting St. Molng.²⁷² The tale *Echtra Mac N-Echach Muigmedóin* (the adventures of the sons of Eochu Muigmedóin) relates how a Saxon princess named Cairenn was forcibly abducted and used as a concubine by the Irish high-king Eochu Muigmedóin.²⁷³ Similarly, the Irish laws depict a society for which the concepts of 'marriage by abduction' and even 'marriage by rape' were not unfamiliar.²⁷⁴ The Irish chroniclers

²⁶⁸ "...ac y delis y wreic ac kymeth yn wreic idaw ehun." *ByT*, pp. 22–23.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 54–57. This abduction was in direct contravention of Owain's father, Cadwgan, see *ByT*, pp. 56–57. This incident is discussed in further detail in chapter 5.

²⁷⁰ Womenfolk are consistently portrayed as items of plunder in this tale, for examples see *TBC*, pp. 177, 218, 247.

²⁷¹ *Duanaire Finn: The Book of the Lays of Fionn*, 3 (London: Irish texts Society, 1953), reference taken from Nagy *Wisdom*, p. 19. This text is extant in a seventeenth-century manuscript, however, the tradition it portrays certainly dates from the medieval period, see Nagy, *Wisdom*, pp. 7, 19.

²⁷² This tale is found in a manuscript dating to the mid-twelfth century, "Two Anecdotes concerning St. Moling", V.E. Hull (ed. and trans.), *ŽCP*, 18, 1930, pp. 90–99. See also *The Book of Leinster*, R.I. Best et al. (eds.) (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1954–67), lines 36707–10.

²⁷³ This story appears to date to the eleventh century, *Echtra Mac N-Echach Muigmedóin*, *The Cycles of the Kings*, M. Dillon (ed. and trans.) (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 38–41.

²⁷⁴ *CIH*, 42.1–13 and *Cáin Lánamna*, *Ancient Laws of Ireland*, J. O'Donovan and E.O. Curry (eds.) (Dublin: printed for H.M.S.O., published by A. Thom, London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1869), vol. ii, pp. 404–409. See also Kelly, *Guide*, pp. 70–71, 136–137 and Bitel, *Land*, pp. 58–59, Patterson, *Cattle Lords*, pp. 215, 296.

reveal that such practices were a very real phenomenon; for example, an entry for 840 in *The Annals of Inisfallen* notes that whilst a prince, named Feidlimid, was harrying Leth Cuinn “he seized Gormlaith, daughter of Murchad, king of Laigin, together with her female train.”²⁷⁵ Such activities were not confined to the early medieval period either as in 1132 Diarmait Mac Murchada, king of Leinster, abducted the abbess of Cell Dair; Diarmait also stole away the wife of his rival Tigernán Ua Ruairc in 1152; an act which was to trigger the English invasion of Ireland.²⁷⁶

The scarcity of insular historical evidence makes the identification of such activities more problematic for Scotland. Nevertheless, we know from Icelandic sources that Scandinavian warriors were perpetrating female abductions in that region during the ninth century. *Landnámabók* (the Icelandic book of settlement) is the earliest Icelandic source we have and dates to the first half of the twelfth century. Its author recorded the colonization of Iceland using orally transmitted genealogies and accounts. It is, therefore, substantially more reliable than the later thirteenth-century sagas which contain a great deal that is fictional.²⁷⁷ *Landnámabók* relates that in 874 two young Norse warriors, Holmfast and Grim, slew Asbiorn, ruler of the Hebrides, and enslaved his wife and daughter.²⁷⁸ The same source also notes that Helgi, son of Ottar, harried Scotland in 886 and took Nidbiorg, daughter of the petty Scottish king Biólan, as part of his plunder.²⁷⁹

Adomnán, the seventh-century biographer of St. Columba of Iona, hints that similar abductions might have been occurring within Scottish

²⁷⁵ “... 7 Gormlaith ingen Murchada ríge Laigen, do gabail cona banchure...”, *The Annals of Inisfallen*, S. Mac Airt (ed. and trans.) (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1951), pp. 128–129. The *Annals of Inisfallen* is the most important historical source for events in Munster during the medieval period. The Annals to 1130 were composed at the island monastery of Innisfallen in the lower lake of Killarney. Furthermore, the early twelfth-century entries were virtually contemporary with the events they portray.

²⁷⁶ See *The Annals of Loch Cé*, W.M. Hennessy (ed. and trans.) (London: Longman, 1871), sa 1132, p. 131 and F.X. Martin “Diarmait Mac Murchada and the Coming of the Normans” in A. Cosgrove (ed.), *A New History of Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), vol. ii, pp. 43–66, 49–50. See also chapter 3 and chapter 5. Similarly, Muirchertach Ua Briain (the king of Dublin and Munster, d. 1119) made a raid against the men of Breifne in 1111 and “plundered them and brought their womenfolk and cows to Mumu” “... coros aige 7 co tarat a muna 7 a mbu co firu Muman...” *AI*, pp. 268–269.

²⁷⁷ *Íslendingabók*, *Landnámabók*, 2 vols, S. Hluti (ed.) (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska fornritafélag, 1968).

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 295.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 123.

society. He related that St. Columba had once interceded on behalf of an Irish girl who had been abducted, enslaved and subsequently purchased by a wizard named Broichan.²⁸⁰ In addition, a later chronicler noted that a tenth-century Scottish king named Culen (d. 977) was slain in Lothian by Rhiderch, king of Strathclyde, in revenge for the abduction of Rhiderch's daughter.²⁸¹ The name Culen (which in Gaelic means 'the whelp') is certainly evocative of a *fian* warrior. It appears that Culen also followed a *fian*-like lifestyle as he is said to have been killed "because of the rape of his (i.e. king Rhiderch's) daughter, whom the king (Culen) had carried off for himself."²⁸² The fifteenth-century Scottish historian Walter Bower certainly associated Culen's behaviour with that of a violent youthful warrior noting that

He was worthless and careless as regards ruling the kingdom... For he spurned the advice of reasonable men and clung to the pursuits of the young like a second Rehoboam.²⁸³

It appears that such incidents continued to occur within Scottish society during the twelfth century. Indeed, the English chroniclers of that period consistently complained about the abduction and enslavement of English women by Scottish raiding parties.²⁸⁴ Furthermore, Walter Map related that the leader of a savage war band that operated from an island off the mainland abducted the mistress of a Scottish warrior named Gillescop.²⁸⁵ Map noted that Gillescop was so incensed at the dishonour done to him by this action that he swam half naked and armed only with a sword to the island base of the kidnapper. After

²⁸⁰ *Adomnán of Iona, Life of St. Columba*, R. Sharpe (ed. and trans.) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), p. 181. St. Columba is said to have died in 597. Adomnán, the author of his *Vita* was abbot of Iona during the late seventh century (679–704).

²⁸¹ *Prose and Verse Chronicles. Early Sources in Scottish History*, 2 vols, A.O. Anderson (ed. and trans.) (Edinburgh; London: Oliver and Boyd, 1922), vol. i, p. 476. This account is found in a fourteenth-century manuscript inserted within *The Chronicle of Melrose*. However, Anderson has argued that it is a redaction of a much earlier eleventh-century account, see M.O. Anderson, "Scottish Materials in a Paris Manuscript", *SHR*, xxxviii, 1949, pp. 37–39. The account was also reproduced by John of Fordun and Walter Bower, see *CSN*, vol. i, pp. 161–162 and *Scotichron.*, vol. ii, p. 355.

²⁸² *PVC*, *ESSH*, vol. i, p. 476.

²⁸³ "*Ad regni vero regimen inutilis et remissus fuit... Nam, spreto senatorum consilio, juvenum, tamquam alter roboam, in omnibus inherebat vestigiis.*" *Scotichron.*, vol. ii, pp. 37–39. See also *CSN*, p. 162.

²⁸⁴ For examples, see *HR*, *SMOO*, vol. ii, pp. 190–192, 290 and *HA*, pp. 710–711. See also chapter 5.

²⁸⁵ *DNC*, pp. 180–181. Map relates this anecdote in a manner that suggests that he knew Gillescop personally, however, there is no way of corroborating these events.

spying the chieftain molesting his mistress he leaped into the offender's hall and slew him in front of his own retinue. Having regained his masculine honour Gillescop subsequently escaped; however, he made no effort to rescue his concubine whom he presumably felt had been sullied by her abduction.²⁸⁶

It is generally only abductions conducted by high status warriors and involving noble or religious women that have left their mark on the historical record. By contrast the abduction or sexual abuse of low status women was rarely registered. Medieval contemporaries clearly regarded such women as sexually accessible to all for they lacked any powerful male guardian. Even in cases involving high status women, little concern was shown for any injury done to the female victim. The medieval legal tracts clearly viewed actions of sexual violence and female abduction as a dispute between two powerful men: the rapist/abductor and the victim's male guardian. In Anglo-Saxon law, compensation for rape or abduction was payable only to the victim's male guardian.²⁸⁷ Similarly, the Welsh *Laws of Hywel Dda* state that if a woman was abducted then her assailant must pay her *amobr* (a fee payable originally on the loss of a woman's virginity) to her male guardian.²⁸⁸ The early medieval Irish law tract *Críth Gablach* notes that the compensation due for the rape or sexual harassment of women was payable to her father, husband or son.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ See *Aethelberht 82–85, Alfred 8–10, Die Gesetze*, pp. 8, 54–56, *The (so called) Laws of William I, 18.1, 35, Die Gesetze*, pp. 504, 514. Hough has argued that in the ninth West Saxon *Domboc* code of Alfred the Great compensation for rape was payable to the female victim. Her thesis is based predominantly on her interpretation of terminology within that specific code. Indeed, it does not account for the weight of contemporary evidence suggesting that male guardianship and sexual jealousy were of fundamental importance for honour systems and power holding in ninth-century Old English society. Hough acknowledges that in later English codes rape was “regarded as a crime not against the woman but against her lord.” Hough, “Alfred's *Domboc*”, pp. 5–8, 19–20. For alternative interpretations to Hough see R.M. Karras, “Desire, Descendants and Dominance: Slavery, The Exchange of Women, and Masculine Power” in Frantzen, *Work of Work*, pp. 16–30, 28 note 43, and D.S. Girsch, “Metaphorical Usage, Sexual Exploitation, and Divergence in Old English Terminology for Male and Female Slaves” in Frantzen, *Work of Work*, pp. 30–54, 46, 50.

²⁸⁸ *LHD*, pp. 49–51. Although the *amobr* was originally payable on the loss of a woman's virginity the law makes it clear that if a woman who had previously been deflowered was raped then her guardian should still receive her *amobr* as compensation, *ibid.*, p. 242. See also Pryce, *Native Law*, p. 218.

²⁸⁹ *Críth Gablach*, lines 121–124, p. 5. See also Kelly, *Guide*, pp. 134–137.

Instances of abduction and/or rape clearly sullied noble female victims with the characteristics of women of lower status. A man's failure to protect his women and prevent female abduction was, thereby, directly equated with the failure of his masculine prowess. Even if he was able to recover his female dependent she would have potentially been exposed to rape or sexual abuse regardless of whether such an act had actually been committed.²⁹⁰ This was disastrous for his social standing as his power and honour would be significantly diminished in the eyes of his peers. For the female victim things were even worse. Aside from the horrific physical and psychological trauma she had undergone she would also become a constant reminder of her guardian's failure as a man. Indeed, her honour and status might be so diminished that she would be treated, thereafter, like a slave or a servant.²⁹¹ On the other hand, her abductor or assailant had succeeded in usurping the honour of both his female victim and her male guardian. He, thereby, emphasised his possession of the women's procreative abilities whilst simultaneously emasculating his male competitor. Furthermore, his physical and social power would be highlighted in the process.²⁹²

Slave Raiding and Virilization: The 'Rape' of a Territory

In the modern Western world rape is generally conceptualised as an act perpetrated by one individual upon the body of another. However, strategies of mass rape and the abduction of the women and children of a territory constitute powerful socio-political actions and, as such,

²⁹⁰ This explains why abduction, elopement and rape were often conflated within the Old English law codes, see Coleman, "Rape", p. 194, Hough, "Alfred's *Domboc*", p. 8. Friedman notes that during the Crusades warriors from both sides generally assumed that it was virtually impossible for a woman to keep either her chastity or honour in captivity. Y. Friedman, "Captivity and Ransom: The Experience of Women" in J. France (ed.), *Medieval Warfare 1000–1300* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 121–139, 127.

²⁹¹ Friedman has revealed how, in the context of the Crusades, abduction and captivity would significantly reduce the status of noble women from both sides of the conflict, noting "...redemption from captivity did not always mean the end of their plight. Their experiences in captivity would haunt them and make their return home difficult, if not impossible." Friedman, "Captivity and Ransom", pp. 126–133.

²⁹² It should be noted that in some cases of abduction the victim might have been a willing party. Indeed, some bride thefts were later recognised by the woman's male guardians suggesting that these 'abductions' had been contrived, perhaps, in an attempt to circumvent the social or ecclesiastical restrictions concerning certain unions. See Clunies Ross, "Concubinage", p. 12.

have a longstanding and highly symbolic significance for the practise of warfare.²⁹³ Such strategies continue to be employed as a weapon to terrorise opposing populations, especially during bitter inter-ethnic conflicts.²⁹⁴ The societies of medieval Europe were in no way exceptional in this regard. Friedman has highlighted how the women and children of opposing forces were consistently targeted by both Christian and Muslim armies during the Crusading period.²⁹⁵ A significant number of these captured women were subsequently enslaved whilst “the sexual abuse of female captives was more or less taken for granted. Women were raped...as a matter of course, and this was considered a normal part of warfare.”²⁹⁶ The early eleventh-century Norman historian Dudo of St. Quentin clearly characterised the plunder of a territory, and the abduction of its women, in terms of violent sexual penetration. When Dudo related the story of how his Viking forebear, Alstignus, had undertaken a frenzied raiding enterprise on the town of Luna he placed the following words in warrior leader’s mouth:

Let us pillage the whole province and burn this city. Lead all the more prisoners and spoil to the ships. Let the inhabitants of this land feel that we have been within their borders.²⁹⁷

Viking armies in England and on the continent were wont to settle in convents for reasons which were, almost certainly, lascivious but which also carried powerful social meaning.²⁹⁸ If the men of a particular territory were unable to protect their women then this was clearly regarded as a sign of their weakness. Rape has frequently been a by-product of warfare and, as Coleman has pointed out, the frequent conflicts between

²⁹³ Taylor suggests that a Venus figurine depicting a bound pregnant woman from the Kostienki site complex on the Don river in southern Russia and dating to between 24,000 and 21,000 BP, constitutes very early evidence of the capture of the enslavement of women in warfare, Taylor, “Ambused by a Grotesque”, pp. 225–226.

²⁹⁴ R.M. Hayden, “Rape and Rape Avoidance in Ethno-National Conflicts: Sexual Violence and Liminalized States”, *American Anthropologist*, vol. 120, 1, March 2000, pp. 27–41 and Hutchinson, “Nuer ethnicity militarized”, pp. 6–13.

²⁹⁵ Friedman, “Captivity and Ransom”, pp. 121–126.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

²⁹⁷ Here Dudo was drawing on biblical allusions from Genesis and Deuteronomy, see Christiansen, note 94. The rape and abduction of the young men and women of Luna, and of other communities targeted by the Vikings, are graphically related by Dudo in this section of his history, *Dudo of St. Quentin, History of the Normans*, E. Christiansen (ed. and trans.) (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1998).

²⁹⁸ Coleman, “Rape”, p. 195.

various ethnic and political groups of medieval Britain would have “provided many opportunities for the opportunist soldier rapist.”²⁹⁹

For the societies under discussion, the abduction and enslavement of all the women (including those of lower status) within an opponent’s territory was another significant strategy through which young warriors asserted their prowess and power. The usurpation of the procreative control of the vanquished male was symbolically emphasised by the massacre of the very young and the abduction, not only, of the women but also of the children of his territory. This was a practice that was evident within all the societies of medieval Britain prior to the Norman Conquest. If the *Táin Bó Cúalnge* provides an accurate reflection of early Irish society then “womenfolk and youths and boys” must have been the stock form of plunder of the Irish warrior.³⁰⁰ This literary supposition receives further support from the twelfth-century text *Cogadh Gaedhil re Gallaibh* (*The War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill*).³⁰¹ This provides an interesting account of the Irish victory over Scandinavian forces at Limerick in 968. The author notes that following that great battle the Irish war bands had

...carried away their (i.e. the Scandinavians’) soft, youthful, bright, matchless girls; their blooming silk-clad young women; and their active, large, and well formed boys.³⁰²

During the eleventh century native Irish slave raiding activities were extremely widespread and almost certainly motivated by the desire to acquire female slaves.³⁰³ We have already seen that such activities continued to occur within Irish society during the first half of the twelfth century.³⁰⁴

Warrior fraternities within Wales appear to have been conducting similar slaving activities. This is made clear in the twelfth-century biog-

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ *TBC*, pp. 177, 218–219, 246–249.

³⁰¹ *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh, The War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill*, J. Todd (ed. and trans.) (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867), pp. 78–81. Admittedly this is a late account for a tenth-century battle, however, at the very least it provides an idea of what the twelfth-century author felt would have happened to a defeated army’s community.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ For examples of the prolific nature of Irish slave raiding activities in this period see Holm, “Slave Trade”, pp. 336–337.

³⁰⁴ See examples above.

raphy of Gruffudd ap Cynan (king of Gwynedd 1098–1137).³⁰⁵ The author of this panygeric commented that during his struggle for the throne of Gwynedd the Welsh prince fought a battle during which he slew his enemy Trahaearn ap Caradog (king of Gwynedd, d. 1081). Following this Gruffudd is said to have asserted his power over his rival by marching to Trahaearn's territory in Arwystli where he "destroyed and killed its people; he burned its houses, and took its women and maidens captive."³⁰⁶ It is extremely significant that the author of the *Historia* considered Gruffudd's actions in this instance to be, not only noteworthy, but also boastworthy. This would indicate that, far from being condemned, female enslavement and rapine were expected activities for a young Welsh warrior in the transitional phase before assuming kingship.³⁰⁷ The Worcester chronicler noted with some hor-

³⁰⁵ There are a number of extant accounts of Gruffudd's life, but the only surviving medieval version exists in a fragmented state in the NLW, Peniarth MS 17. This thirteenth-century manuscript contains a Middle Welsh version of the text and is widely regarded to be a later vernacular redaction of an earlier, now lost, Latin original which is thought to date from the mid twelfth-century. The earlier Latin version has, more recently, been 'reconstructed' by Paul Russell who argues, quite convincingly, that a Latin version of the text found in the much later sixteenth-century Peniarth MS 434 (c. 1575–85) is actually a copy of the twelfth-century Latin original which he tentatively dates to the period 1137–1148. In fact, both the Latin and vernacular versions of the text are remarkably similar in content and, although the historical details contained within them are far from reliable, they do contain much that can be corroborated by other sources. At the very least, the *Historia/Vita* provides us with information regarding the ideas and attitudes of its contemporaries towards the likely activities of Gruffudd and his followers. The *Brut y Tŷwysogyon* confirms that Gruffudd fought a battle at Mynydd Carn in 1081 and that Trahaearn was slain during that conflict. The author's account of slave taking is supported by the poem "Meilir's Elegy for Gruffudd ap Cynan" which was written shortly after the Welsh king's death in 1137. See *VGC*, pp. 1–17. For the vernacular version see *HGK*, see also "Meilir's Elegy for Gruffudd ap Cynan", A. French (ed. and trans.), *ÉC*, 16, 1979, pp. 263–268.

³⁰⁶ "...ac y distrywys ac y lladaud y guerin; ac y llosges y thei, a'e gwraged a'e morynnion a duc keithiwet." *HGK*, see pp. 36–37, 46–47, 69, 78–79. For a brief analysis of the debates regarding this vernacular version see Wyatt, "Gruffudd ap Cynan and the Hiberno-Norse World", *WHR*, 9, no. 4, December, 1999, pp. 594–617. The Latin version states that "raging with slaughter and fire, he dragged their wives and daughters off into captivity and again avenged the wrongs done by Trahaearn with their lives" "*in quo cede et flamma desaeviens, uxoris virginibusque eorum in captivitatem tractis Trahaerni iniurias rursus in illarum capita persolvit*" see *VGC*, pp. 70–71.

³⁰⁷ A comparable connection was made by Saxo Grammaticus who noted how the warrior youths of Denmark considered such ravages to be both "manly and proper", see above. See also Wyatt, "Gruffudd", pp. 614–615 and chapter 5. Interestingly, the *Historia* also notes that during an invasion of Gruffudd's kingdom in 1098 Hugh of Avranches, earl of Chester, was able to bribe an Irish war fleet with the promise of youthful male and female slaves, *HGK*, pp. 46–47, 78–79, see also *VGC*, pp. 82–85.

ror that similar activities were taking place during a Welsh insurgency in 1136, relating that

There was such slaughter that besides those men taken into captivity there remained 10,000 captive women whose husbands with numberless children were drowned, consumed by flames, or put to the sword.³⁰⁸

Slave raids such as this had undoubtedly been reciprocated during the pre-Conquest era. As we have seen, the Old English word for the Welsh, ‘*wealh*’, was a term that carried the dualistic meaning of both ‘a foreigner’ and ‘a slave.’³⁰⁹ An eighth-century Old English riddle describing a dark haired Welsh slave girl provides further evidence for Anglo-Saxon slave raiding activities in Wales.³¹⁰ Furthermore, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* provides some evidence to suggest that English warriors had also enslaved Scandinavian communities, just as their Irish counterparts had done at Limerick in 968. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle A* related that when an English force attacked the Viking fortress at Benfleet in 894 they “seized all that was inside it, both money and women and also children, and brought all into London town.”³¹¹ It could be argued that this force was reclaiming English property and women. However, Scandinavian raiders in England were sometimes accompanied by their wives. This would appear to have been the case in this instance because the wife and children of the Danish leader, Hæsten, were abducted during this raid. The *Chronicle* states that Hæsten’s family were subsequently returned to him as one of his sons was also king Alfred’s godson; however, no mention is made concerning the release of the other Scandinavian wives taken in this raid. A few years later the same chronicle notes that Viking warriors made sure that they secured their women before leaving their fortification in East Anglia, a statement which suggests that these women would have been a clear target for the opposing English forces.³¹²

³⁰⁸ “...in quo tante hominum strages facta est, ut, exceptis uiris in captiuitatem abductis, de mulieribus captiuitatis decies centum decime remanerent, maritis earum cum paruulis innumeris, partim aqua demersis, partim flamma consumtis, partim gladio trucidatis.” The Worcester chronicler’s account was written close to the events during the first half of the twelfth century see *CJW*, vol. iii, pp. 220–221.

³⁰⁹ See above.

³¹⁰ *Riddle 12*, *EB*, lines 7–12, p. 186.

³¹¹ “...7 genamon eal þæt þær binnan wæs, ge on feo, ge on wifum, ge eac on bearnum, 7 brohton eall into Lundenbyrig...” *ASC MS A*, J.M. Bately (ed.) (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1986), vol. iii, p. 57, translation from Swanton, *ASC*, pp. 86–87.

³¹² Swanton, *ASC*, p. 89.

The complaints of Archbishop Wulfstan II of York suggest that Anglo-Saxon slave raiding activities were still prevalent during the early years of the eleventh century.³¹³ Similar complaints were said to have been made by Wulfstan's name sake, bishop Wulfstan of Worcester (1010–1095), during the final half of the eleventh century.³¹⁴ The *Anglo Saxon Chronicle E* relates that in 1065 a band of Northumbrians who were travelling south to Northampton “captured many hundreds of people and took them north with them so that shire and other neighbouring shires were the worse for it for many years.”³¹⁵ The sheer scale of this slave raid seems to have made it worthy of note; moreover, the level of depopulation suffered in these districts strongly suggests that many women were taken. The twelfth-century historian William of Malmesbury complained that there had been a brisk trade in female slaves within Anglo-Saxon society.³¹⁶ Another twelfth-century commentator, John of Salisbury, remarked that when Harold Godwineson had launched an attack on the Welsh king Gruffudd ap Llewelyn in 1063 he had conducted the campaign using tried and tested warrior tactics:

...killing every male he could find, all the way to pitiful little children, he pacified the province with the edge of a sword... And thereby the strength of the Britons (i.e. the Welsh) was so impaired by the duke (Harold) that almost the entire nation seemed to die out and their women were married to Englishmen...³¹⁷

³¹³ In his *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* Wulfstan complained at some length about the slaving activities of both the Vikings and the English within England. He voiced particular concern about the morally corrupting effects of the sexual abuse of female slaves. See *SLAA*, pp. 47–68, translation from Swanton, *ASP*, pp. 116–122.

³¹⁴ See, *Vita Wulfstani of William of Malmesbury*, R.R. Darlington (ed.), Camden Society, vol. xl, London 1928, p. 43, translation from Swanton, *TLE*, p. 126. The *Vita Wulfstani* is William of Malmesbury's interpretation of an earlier Old English Life of Wulfstan that had been compiled by the bishop Wulfstan's long-standing chaplain, Colman. The incidental information given in the *Vita* is, therefore, of a relatively reliable nature, *ibid.*, p. viii.

³¹⁵ “*fela hund manna hi namon. 7 leddon norð mid heom. Swa þet seo scyre 7 þa oðra scyre þe þær neh sindon wurdon fela wintra þe wyrzan*” see Swanton, *ASC*, p. 192, and for this and further examples of Anglo-Saxon slave raiding activities see Pelteret, *Slavery*, pp. 72–74.

³¹⁶ *GRA*, vol. ii, pp. 362–363, 458–459, 497–498.

³¹⁷ “...et usque ad miserationem paruulorum omnem masculum qui inueniri potuit interficiens in ore gladii pacauit... Adeoque uirtute ducis tunc confecti sunt Britones ut fere gens tota deficere uideretur et ex indulgentia iam dicti Regis mulieres eorum nupserint Anglis...” *Ioannis Saresberienensis Episcopi Carnotensis Policratici*, C.C.I. Webb (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon, 1909), vol. ii, pp. 19–20 translation from, *Policraticus*, J. Nederman (ed. and trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 112–114.

Admittedly this is a late source for mid-eleventh century events, nevertheless, it clearly reveals that ideas regarding the pillaging activities of Anglo-Saxon warriors and their appropriation of women were still in currency during the twelfth century. Even more interestingly, John of Salisbury praises Harold's ruthless behaviour and offers him as a role model for contemporary warrior youths whom he felt were effeminate and inexperienced in war.³¹⁸

The evidence for insular slave raiding activities by elements of Scottish society is somewhat sparser. Yet, given the similarities with Irish society and the powerful influence of the Scandinavian settlements within the region, there is every reason to suspect that similar raids were occurring in Scotland. We have already seen that female abduction might be used as a means to emphasise the Scottish warrior's power. English ecclesiastical commentators clearly felt that Scottish raids upon England during the eleventh and twelfth centuries had been characterised by the enslavement of women and youths. The Durham chronicler noted that, following a raid on Northumbria in 1070, Malcolm Canmore (king of Scotland, 1058–93) carried away so many "youths and girls" (*juvenes vel juvenculæ*) into Scotland so that the region was thereafter filled with the "male and female slaves of the English people." (*Repleta est ergo Scotia servis et ancillis Anglici generis.*)³¹⁹

In the intensely patriarchal societies of medieval Britain gender identity and power were intimately linked. For these societies displays of sheer masculinity were the predominant way in which an individual's status was defined. A man's life was, therefore, structured by his constant struggle to assert his honour and prowess. This sense of masculine honour was expressed primarily through two institutionalised media, namely, formal vengeance and a highly developed and complex sense of sexual jealousy.³²⁰ The significance attributed to female abduction and

³¹⁸ John of Salisbury complained that the youths of his day postponed "honourable duties for whoremongering... (and) are more familiar with the cithern, the lyre... and the sound of the organ at banquet than with the clarion and the trumpet." (*Iuventus nostra... scortationi honesta postponens officia, tota die insectans uoluptatem... citharam, liram... et uocem organi in conuiujs magis agnoscit quam lituum aut tubam in castris.*) See Poli. (Webb), pp. 19–20 (Nederman), pp. 112–114.

³¹⁹ *HR, SMOO*, vol. ii, pp. 190–192, translation modified from A.O. Anderson (ed. and trans.), *Scottish Annals from English Chroniclers* (London: D.N. Nutt, 1908). pp. 91–93. For other examples of Scots taking female slaves see chapter 5.

³²⁰ The medieval British societies under discussion may be closely paralleled by similar patriarchal societies in the Middle East during this period, see Hodgson, *Islam*, pp. 140–141. Hodgson has noted that within these societies any violation of a man's

enslavement within the societies of medieval Britain reveals the high value that they placed upon female possession and procreative control. These were societies in which the powerful men accumulated women and then jealously controlled sexual access to them. The guardianship of numerous females underlined masculinity, virility, wealth, and the military power to protect and, in addition, guaranteed lineage. Indeed, for societies in which access to 'honourable' women was extremely restricted the act of sexual intercourse was symbolic of prowess and hegemony. Consequently control over women was considered the essence of power within these communities. The abduction and the enslavement of women, therefore, constituted a symbolic gauntlet that could be thrown down as a statement of intent to conquer or as a means to emphasise power. The practice of rapine and enslavement was not only an expected code of behaviour for warrior initiates but, also for exiled leaders and other men who were in a transitional phase of their lifecycle. Sexual possession and enslavement were, thereby, methods by which an individual might reassert his position in the warrior hierarchy. Furthermore, the rampant sexual license of such transitional males fostered a pool of illegitimate, often unacknowledged sons, who would eventually join war-bands themselves. The institution of the male warrior fraternity was, therefore, self-perpetuating. Moreover, violent sexual activity was fundamentally significant for constructions of masculine identity in the societies of medieval Britain.

Slavery and Patriarchy

In many pre-industrial societies powerful men have emphasised their social position through the possession of women in a system that has been defined by anthropologists as 'resource polygyny'.³²¹ Within such a system women might be accumulated in various ways, for example: through marriage, concubinage, paternity, fosterage, guardianship, service and slavery.³²² Yet, in all these forms women were viewed through masculine eyes as possessions, even trophies that helped to define a man's

personal honour was intimately related to the women who were under his guardianship. He has argued that "...a woman's "honour", her shame, formed an important point in determining the honour of her man." Ibid., p. 141.

³²¹ D. Herlihy, *Medieval Households* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 38.

³²² See Karras, "Desire", pp. 16–30, 24.

status and power.³²³ The accumulation of wealth and military power were merely the necessary prerequisites toward the aspired goal of female accumulation. Once a man had achieved a pre-eminent position in society then the free women under his guardianship would multiply as weaker men entrusted the protection of their women to him.³²⁴ In addition, his ability to purchase and support concubines and female slaves further reinforced his position within the male hierarchy. This also provided him with ample resources with which to reward followers and secure his lineage.³²⁵ Underlining this whole system of masculine purchase was the institution of slavery and, in particular, ownership of female slaves.³²⁶ A female slave could provide sexual gratification whilst simultaneously being subjugated by the same act. If she had a lowly male partner or relative then he too would be humiliated and subordinated. The slave-owner's legitimate spouse or concubines might also be humiliated and threatened by such a union.³²⁷ In addition, other free males would be reminded of their lord's access to a greater number of sexual partners.³²⁸ Powerful men were, thereby, able to assert themselves over their male competitors and subsume the interests of all the women under their protection through the sexual domination of slave women.³²⁹ For the communities of medieval Britain slavery was an essential element of wider systems of patriarchal power and control. It is striking that while the populations of Ireland, Wales, Scotland and Anglo-Saxon England continued to sanction long standing practices of resource polygyny (i.e. through concubinage, institutionalised sexual jealousy and illegitimate heirship) the institution of slavery retained its powerful cultural significance. This parallels a number of cross-cultural anthropological studies which suggest that there is a powerful and

³²³ This should not be regarded as female objectification in any modern sense; however, as in pre-industrial societies even objects are attributed with highly personalised qualities, see G. Rubin, "The Traffic in Women; Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex" in R. Reiter (ed.), *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York; London: Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp. 157–210, 174.

³²⁴ See, Jochens, "Illicit Love", p. 369 and Herlihy, *Households*, p. 38.

³²⁵ Karras, "Desire", pp. 23–24.

³²⁶ As Karras has noted "Men could be dishonoured by enslavement, and by owning them masters could exert control over them directly, but the ownership of slave women, because it fit into the whole system of masculine purchase of control over women's sexuality, was of greater ideological significance." See Karras, "Desire", p. 24.

³²⁷ See note 479 below.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

interconnected correlation between polygyny, female abduction/enslavement, warrior cults and the practice of warfare in pre-industrial societies.³³⁰

Within a highly institutionalised system of masculine purchase there is no substitute for control over women. In order to assert his place within the male hierarchy an individual must have control over the procreative capabilities of a daughter, a sister, a female kinswomen or servant. Essentially, “he must have control over some female flesh.”³³¹ Within such societies men of all social levels would aspire to female accumulation. In medieval Norse society the free farmer’s opportunities for sexual access were far more limited than those available to their powerful noble counterparts. Nevertheless, it appears that they would use their female domestic servants or slave women for the same ends.³³² Judging by the ecclesiastical disapproval regarding the sexual abuse of slave women it appears likely that similar practices were prevalent in the societies of medieval Britain.³³³ However, it is interesting to note that despite consistent complaints regarding secular concubinage and other extra-marital relationships, many ecclesiastics appear to have been relatively accepting and even accommodating toward such behaviour. The Irish saints’ lives provide strikingly few examples of authorial condemnation of resource polygyny. In the *Vita Prima Sanctae Brigite* the saint’s noble father, Dubthach, had impregnated her mother who was a slave concubine. Yet despite this, it was Dubthach’s legitimate wife, also carrying a child by him, who drew vehement authorial disapproval for wanting to expel the slave girl from the household.³³⁴ Furthermore, the punishments meted out by the penitential authors for extra-marital relationships with concubines and slaves were frequently light and inconsequential.³³⁵ The ninth-century Old English *Penitential of Pseudo-Egbert* states that if a man “has a concubine and no legal wife,

³³⁰ White and Burton, “Causes of Polygyny”, p. 874. See also Divale and Harris, “Population, Warfare”, p. 526, C. Clover, “The Politics of Scarcity; Notes on the Sex Ratio in Early Scandinavia”, *Scandinavian Studies*, 60, 1988, pp. 147–188.

³³¹ G. Rubin, “Traffic”, p. 205.

³³² J.M. Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 35–36.

³³³ See examples above.

³³⁴ *VPSB*, pp. 14–15. For numerous other examples of the ecclesiastical tolerance shown toward concubinage and illegitimacy in the Irish hagiographical tracts see, Herlihy, *Households*, pp. 37–38.

³³⁵ Clunies Ross, “Concubinage”, pp. 23–24.

he has to do as it seems (best) to him about that.”³³⁶ The Irish and Welsh penitentials reveal a similarly tolerant attitude toward such sinful sexual behaviour. The *Penitential of Finnian*, which is found in three ninth-century manuscripts, states that if a man begets several children by his female slave then he should do one year’s penance and cease having intercourse with his concubine.³³⁷ The *Canones Wallici* (the Welsh Canons) state that if a married man

....intends to have in addition a slave woman as a concubine, he shall be excluded from the Church of God...unless he is called back to penance.³³⁸

In this instance excommunication appears to be the very last resort applicable only to those men who would not repent. Such liaisons must have been commonplace and it is difficult to imagine how such punishments would have been strictly enforced or how effective they would have been as deterrents to such behaviour.³³⁹

In addition, more worldly ecclesiastical figures appear to have openly participated in this system of masculine purchase. During the eighth century abbot Beorwold of Glastonbury was offered an exceptionally high wergeld if he would return a girl named Eppa whom he had kidnapped and was holding captive.³⁴⁰ Like his warrior counterparts then, the Abbot clearly considered it acceptable to signal his political power through the practice of female abduction and accumulation. Indeed, Herlihy has pointed out that even medieval Irish bishops renowned for their chastity appear to have accumulated women in their

³³⁶ The penitential adds “...however, let him see to it that he keeps to one, whether it be the concubine or the wife.” (“7 gif he cyfesan hæbbe 7 nane riht-æwe, he <ah> dæs to donne swa him gedincð; wile he þeah þæt he be on anre gehealden, beo hit cyfes beo hit æwe.” *Die altenglische Version des Halitgâschen Bussbuches: sog. Poenitentiale Pseudo-Egberti*, J. Raith (ed.) (Darmstadt, 1964), 2nd edition, p. 21, taken from Clunies Ross, “Concubinage”, pp. 3–34, 23–24.

³³⁷ It is likely that this penitential was originally composed at an even earlier date. It is attributed to Finnian of Clonard who lived during the central years of the sixth century. *Penitential of Finnian*, 40, *MHP*, pp. 86–97, 95.

³³⁸ “Si quis legitime legis voluntate patrum nuptam filio junxerit et juxta hoc concubinam ancillam sibi habere præsumerit, ipse ab Ecclesia Dei et omni Christianorum mensa sit extraneus, nisi ad penitentiam reuocetur.” *Canones Wallici*, *CED*, vol. i, pp. 127–137, 136. These canonical judgements are extant in a ninth-century manuscript however they may well have been compiled at an earlier date. Haddan and Stubbs suggest that they originated in Wales during the seventh century.

³³⁹ For further comments on this point see chapter 4.

³⁴⁰ *Letter of Brihtwold, archbishop of Canterbury, to Forthhere, bishop of Sherborne* in *EHD*, vol. i, 166, p. 731.

households.³⁴¹ Unisex monasteries also existed in Anglo-Saxon England. For example, there were double houses at Whitby, Minster in Sheppey and at Wimborne.³⁴² This phenomenon is perhaps less surprising when we consider that bishops, abbots and monks were the products of a society in which wealth and power were expressed through the accumulation of women.³⁴³ Despite the rigid doctrinal guidelines regarding monogamy and chastity it seems that many churchmen maintained concubines or owned female slaves.³⁴⁴

The cultural significance of masculine purchase is also indicated by the high value that was placed on women within the societies of medieval Britain. In medieval Irish society the *cumal* (female slave) was the highest attainable unit of value.³⁴⁵ The *cumal* was roughly equivalent to three ounces of silver, or between eight and ten cows, it was also denoted a unit of land.³⁴⁶ Charles-Edwards notes that the *cumal* probably retained its true meaning in the medieval period, and did not merely become an expression of a unit of value.³⁴⁷ It is clearly significant that the *mug* or male slave was not similarly used as a unit of value.³⁴⁸ Male slaves were probably as common as female slaves, and were also presumably a valuable asset. The higher value attributed to the female slave, therefore, provides another indication of the social significance of female ownership and guardianship in medieval Irish society. This significance is further illustrated by the eleventh-century Irish text *Lebor*

³⁴¹ Herlihy, *Households*, p. 39.

³⁴² S. Thompson, *Women Religious, The Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), p. 54 and Clunies Ross, "Concubinage", p. 33.

³⁴³ Clunies Ross, "Concubinage", p. 24. It must be noted that many ecclesiastical leaders were often also powerful secular figures in their own right. Bede complained that many of the abbots in Northumbria were not men of God at all but rather nobles who had purchased this title with riches. See "*Letter from Bede to Egbert, Bishop of York on the state of the Northumbrian Church*", *CED*, vol. iii, pp. 319–321.

³⁴⁴ For examples, see chapter 4. Similarly, Iris Origa has noted that even during the fourteenth century certain priests in Tuscany were openly purchasing female slaves on the slave market, I. Origa, "The Domestic Enemy: The Eastern Slaves in Tuscany in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries", *Speculum*, vol. xxx, July, 1955, pp. 321–366, 328.

³⁴⁵ Kelly, *Guide*, pp. 112–113 and Patterson, *Social Death*, p. 168. Similarly, in the Germanic law codes of the Alamans and Bavarians the honour value placed on women was twice that of the men *The Laws of the Alamans and the Bavarians*, VIII, 9, T.J. Rivers (ed. and trans.) (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), p. 30.

³⁴⁶ Patterson, *Social Death*, p. 168. See also Kelly, *Guide*, p. 112 and T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), p. 481.

³⁴⁷ Charles-Edwards, *Kinship*, p. 479.

³⁴⁸ Kelly, *Guide*, p. 113.

Na Cert (the Book of Rights). This consists of a lengthy poem that lists a notional set of stipends and tributes payable to and from the high kings, provincial kings and local leaders and groups of Ireland.³⁴⁹ It appears that these notional stipends were never actually paid. Nevertheless, the text was composed by a professional poet, who constructed these imaginary tributes and stipends in order to flatter the kings and high kings of Ireland.³⁵⁰ To do this effectively the poet must have drawn upon his knowledge of the types of gifts and tributes that were usually exchanged between the élite in his society. The poet describes how each provincial king was to receive a stipend from the high-king of Ireland, and then redistribute this to his local leaders. Significantly, both male and female slaves feature in the majority of these stipends, and are equated with extremely high status goods. For example, the stipend of the king of golden Éle was "...six shields, six fine swords, six slaves and six women slaves."³⁵¹ Furthermore, the appearance and disposition of the female slaves were frequently described in relative detail. The king of Déisi was to receive "eight swarthy women" ("*ocht mná donda*"), the king of Cenél nAeda was entitled to "five fair women" ("*cóic mná finda fír-glana*"), the king of Uí Thuintre was to obtain "three graceful women" ("*trí mná co cendaib cuema*") and the king of Uí Nialláin was to receive "three merry women" ("*trí mná mór a muirn*").³⁵² Interestingly, the king of Leinster was to give to the king of Uí Boirche "eight women whom he has not dishonoured."³⁵³ This would appear to underline the significance of honour-based sexual jealousy within this system of masculine purchase.³⁵⁴ In addition, it also reveals how control over a woman's procreational abilities might be closely related to perceptions of her social and economic value. Indeed, *Lebor na Cert* illustrates that female slaves were deemed to be important wealth items, crucial to the gift giving and tribute network.³⁵⁵

³⁴⁹ *LnC*, pp. ix–xxv.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁵¹ "*Tuaristol ríge Éli in óir ó ríge Caisil in chom-óil sé scéth is sé claidim chain, sé mogaid, sé ban-mogaid.*" *Ibid.*, pp. 42–43, other examples pp. 5, 11, 33, 35, 43, 59, 67, 73, 81, 87, 99 and 107.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 69, 71 and 81, other examples on pp. 87, 89, 99 and 107.

³⁵³ "...*ocht mná nírús mudaig...*", *Ibid.*, pp. 106–107.

³⁵⁴ For a useful cross cultural discussion on the significance of virginity in pre-industrial societies see A. Schlegel, "Status, Property, and the Value on Virginity", *American Ethnologist*, 18, 4, November 1991, pp. 719–734.

³⁵⁵ Holm, "Slave Trade", p. 339. *Cumals* are bestowed as betrothal gifts in *TBDD* lines 62 and 99–100, pp. 2–4.

Although no unit of value comparable to the *cumal* existed in Welsh society, a similar value system may be inferred from the Welsh laws. The high value attributed to slave concubines is evident in a code that states that the *sarhaed* (insult compensation) of a female slave who did “not go either to spade or to quern” was twice that of a female labourer.³⁵⁶ The clear implication being that such a slave would be valued for her looks and sexual services rather than for her ability to work hard. Similarly, William of Malmesbury recognised that slave concubines had been highly valued in Anglo-Saxon England. Indeed, Malmesbury complained that Earl Godwine’s first wife had traded in attractive young female slaves “...whose beauty and youth would enhance their price, so that by this hideous traffic she could accumulate vast wealth.”³⁵⁷ However, in order to fully understand the significance slavery for such medieval societies then it is important to relate the ownership of female slaves to wider conceptions of patriarchal power.³⁵⁸

The continuing practise of bride theft in the societies of medieval Britain provides an indicator of how concepts of marriage, concubinage, slavery and female possession, in general, were intimately connected. If wives could be forcibly abducted then the levels of dishonour, violence and psychological trauma to which they were exposed might not have been at all dissimilar to the experience of the recently enslaved individual. Even women betrothed through more peaceful means might experience marginalisation, vulnerability, isolation and alienation within the household and community of their new kindred.³⁵⁹ Free concubines might occupy a similarly marginal social space, their position being less secure than a legitimate wife due to their ambiguous legal status and

³⁵⁶ “*Tn sarhaet gwenigawl caeth nyt el [nac] yn raw nac ym mreuan pedeir arugeint ariant atelir.*” *ALIW*, vol. i, p. 701, translation from Jenkins, *LHD*, p. 156.

³⁵⁷ “...*puellas presertim quas decus et aetius pretiosiores facerent, ut earum deformi commertio cumulos opum aggeraret.*” *GRA*, pp. 362–363.

³⁵⁸ See A. Candon, “Power, Politics and Polygamy: Women and Marriage in Late Pre-Norman Ireland” in D. Bracken and D.Ó. Riain-Raedel (eds.), *Ireland and Europe in the Twelfth Century: Reform and Renewal* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2006), pp. 106–127.

³⁵⁹ Millersdaughter, “Geopolitics of Incest”, p. 278. Duby has argued that within their new kindreds the medieval bride “remained an intruder, the object of tenacious distrust”, see G. Duby, *Medieval Marriage: Two Models from Twelfth-Century France*, Elborg Forster (trans.) (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 5–6. See also J. Wood, “The Calumniated Wife in Medieval Welsh Literature” in C.W. Sullivan III (ed.), *The Mabinogi: A Book of Essays* (New York: Garland, 1996), pp. 61–78. Woolf has also suggested that there were distinct similarities between the conditions and experiences of wives and slaves in the early medieval household, Woolf, “At Home”, pp. 68–72.

exclusion from formal betrothal rituals.³⁶⁰ Clunies Ross has highlighted the relationship between concubinage and both the forced and consensual abduction of women within Anglo-Saxon Society.³⁶¹ Moreover, Karras has revealed how slavery and concubinage shared conceptual roots within the Old Norse societies; both institutions helping to define and reinforce partriarchal order.³⁶² Similarly, in early medieval Ireland, male householders were permitted to have unions with a number of women simultaneously. The varied statuses of these women might be legally graded, and to some extent demarcated, nevertheless, the women's experiences, treatment and standing within the household might, at certain times, be very similar.³⁶³

Most free concubines and legitimate wives undoubtedly maintained positions of honour and could, in certain circumstances, exercise considerable power. Contemporaries would have clearly understood this and recognised such distinctions in status. Nonetheless, there remained significant conceptual similarities between these varied female categories and also similarities of experience, especially during the more marginal periods of their life cycles.³⁶⁴ When regarded from this perspective, the Beowulf poets's appellation *Wealhþeow* would appear to be far less incongruous with that character's social role. Despite the clearly derogatory nature of this name it is highly suggestive of female agency in the face of extremely traumatic and challenging circumstances. Indeed, *Wealhþeow*'s name highlights the potential ability of war captive females

³⁶⁰ Clunies Ross, "Concubinage", p. 6.

³⁶¹ "In practice the distinction between rape and elopement must have often been blurred, for the consent of a woman and her kin must have frequently been of little consequence to abductors of sufficient power, especially in cases where the women were captives of war", *ibid.*, p. 12.

³⁶² R.M. Karras, "Slavery and Concubinage in the Viking Age", *Scandinavian Studies*, 62:2, 1990, pp. 141–162.

³⁶³ "...were we to attempt to create objective distinctions between certain forms of polygyny, concubinage and the simple abuse of female slaves and hirelings we should probably fail", see Woolf "At Home", p. 70. See also Clunies Ross, "Concubinage", p. 15, Candon "Power, Politics and Polygamy", pp. 106–110.

³⁶⁴ Patterson has argued that in many slave holding cultures, women enslaved through warfare were able to improve their status through strategies of assimilation and marriage, *Social Death*, pp. 228–230. In a cross cultural study, the anthropologists White and Burton, have suggested that pre-industrial societies which practice polygyny are far more likely to place a high emphasis on warfare, fraternal interest groups, slave raiding and in particular, the capture of women. In most of the societies they examined the captive women were later married or made into concubines, see White and Burton, "Causes of Polygyny", pp. 871–887.

or abductees to assimilate and integrate themselves into significant positions of social standing.

In many pre-industrial societies marriage transactions formed the foundation upon which gift giving networks were based; women being the most valued of all gifts.³⁶⁵ In such societies gift giving networks were a means by which social systems were ordered in the absence of coherent centralised governmental authority. The exchange of gifts, thereby, established reciprocal social links in the hope of creating bonds of trust, solidarity and mutual reliance.³⁶⁶ Paradoxically such exchanges also contributed to hierarchical rivalry and competition because wealthier benefactors might deliberately give more than their counterparts were able to reciprocate.³⁶⁷ Control over that most precious of gifts, marriageable women, therefore, significantly increased the social power of an individual.³⁶⁸ As Gayle Rubin has persuasively argued,

... the result of a gift of women is more profound than the result of other gift transactions, because the relationship thus established is not just one of reciprocity, but one of kinship.³⁶⁹

In Rubin's view, although women were not simply viewed as objects in such transactions a clear distinction was made between the gift and the giver.

If the women are the gifts, then it is the men who are the exchange partners. And it is the partners, not the presents, upon whom reciprocal exchange confers its quasi-mystical power of social linkage.³⁷⁰

Rubin's perspective is not without controversy yet the early medieval legal texts do suggest that similar conceptualisations of marriage exchange existed within the societies of medieval Britain.

³⁶⁵ C. Lévi-Strauss, "The Principle of Reciprocity", in A. Komter (ed.), *The Gift: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), pp. 18–26, 24, Rubin, "Traffic", p. 173, see also Enright, *Lady*, pp. 20–21 and P. Stafford, "Powerful Women in the Early Middle Ages: Queens and Abbesses" in P. Linehan et al. (eds.), *The Medieval World* (London/New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 398–415, 402.

³⁶⁶ Rubin, "Traffic", p. 172, Lévi-Strauss, "Reciprocity", pp. 24–25, see also Pollington, *English Warrior*, pp. 34–36.

³⁶⁷ Rubin, "Traffic", p. 172, Enright, *Lady*, pp. 20–21, Pollington, *English Warrior*, p. 34.

³⁶⁸ Clunies Ross, "Concubinage", p. 9, B. Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion: Love and Marriage in Medieval Iceland and Norway* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 77–85, Clover, "Politics", pp. 112, 118–119, A. Schlegel, "Status", pp. 719–734.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 174. See also Schlegel "Status", pp. 719–734.

The Welsh laws make it clear that whatever other rights a woman might have she was viewed primarily as a gift or possession in relation to marriage. The *Law of Hywel Dda* states that

In three ways *amobr* becomes due for a woman: by gift and transfer, although she not be slept with; and the second, by sleeping openly, although there be neither gift nor transfer; and the third by pregnancy.³⁷¹

Unfortunately, no such legal codes survive from medieval Scotland. Nevertheless, the early Irish laws do reveal that in Gaelic society a man was thought to purchase his bride from her father. Irish law stated that a husband must give a *cuibche* (brideprice) to his prospective father-in-law (*cach athair a chétcoibche*).³⁷² The nature of such an exchange is further clarified by the Old Irish legal term *creic cétmuintire* which means literally ‘purchasing a wife’.³⁷³ Similarly, the late seventh-century *Laws of Ine* reveal that a marital union was regarded as a contract between two men in early-medieval Wessex. For example *Ine 31* states:

...if anyone buys a wife and the marriage does not take place, he (the bride’s guardian) shall return the bridal price and pay (the bridegroom) as much again.³⁷⁴

There is no doubt that this tract paints an overly harsh picture of the restricted rights of Anglo-Saxon women. Indeed, the *Laws of Æthelberht* state that a woman had the right to leave her husband and would obtain half of his property if she took their children with her.³⁷⁵ The

³⁷¹ “Otrymod edeleyr amobr ygreyc: [un yw] orod estin kený kesker canthy; er eyl [yw] o kuelok ac honneyt kený bo rod [nac estyni] e tredyt [yw] o [y] uechýck” *ALIW*, vol. i, pp. 94–95, translation from Jenkins, *LHD*, pp. 54–55. This law code also notes that “...whosoever gives a woman to a man, it is for him to pay her amobyr...”, “Puebennac arodo gureic igur ef pieu talu ehammabr...”, *ibid.*, pp. 88–89, see *LHD*, p. 49. However, the same code also notes that it was possible for a woman to give herself away provided she was able to pay her own *amobr*.

³⁷² *CIH*, 294.40, see also Kelly, *Guide*, pp. 71–72.

³⁷³ Kelly, *Guide*, pp. 71–72.

³⁷⁴ “[Be þam þe man wif byge, 7 seo gift wiðstande.] Gif mon wif gebycge, 7 sio gyft forð ne cume, agife þæt feoh 7 forgielde 7 gebete þam byrgean, swa his borgbryce sie.” *Die Gesetze*, p. 102 see also *LEEK*, pp. 46–47. Similarly, the seventh-century laws of *Æthelberht 77* and *77.1* state that “If a man buys a maiden, the bargain shall stand, if there is no dishonesty. If, however, there is dishonesty, she shall be taken back to her home and the money shall be returned to him.” (“Gif mon mægþ gebigeð, ceapī geceapod sý, gif hit unsfacne is... Gif hit þome facne is, ef*, þær et ham gebrenge, 7 him man his scæt agefe.”) See *Die Gesetze*, pp. 7–8. Clunies Ross argues convincingly that similar practices continued to prevail in Anglo-Saxon England well into the eleventh century, see “Concubinage”, p. 8.

³⁷⁵ *Æthelberht 79*, *Die Gesetze*, p. 8.

Anglo-Saxon wills reveal that noblewomen were able to inherit property and that powerful widows might attain a substantial degree of independence. Nevertheless, in relation to marriage transactions, high status women at least, were primarily regarded as gifts and had little or no say in the choice of their prospective partners.³⁷⁶ This was especially true for young teenage women, yet even wealthy widows had to fight hard to maintain some kind of control over their independence.³⁷⁷

Evidence from the law codes suggests that in the societies of medieval Britain marriage was viewed as an exchange of property or gift bestowal that promoted social bonds and kinship solidarity between powerful men. Given the powerful social significance of marriage exchange then it seems likely that even at a lower level female rewards might aid the consolidation of important social bonds. If a lord granted one of his men sexual access to his female servant or slave girl, then, this might also carry symbolic connotations of favour equal, if not more powerful, in significance than a lavish material gift. Indeed, the donation of sexual access to one's followers must have helped to emphasise both hierarchy and solidarity within societies for which power over women equalled prestige. Karras has argued that this was certainly true for medieval Icelandic society.³⁷⁸ She remarks that competition for women within the Icelandic community was particularly intense. Abundant numbers of unmarried men, therefore, formed fraternities within the

³⁷⁶ The early eleventh-century law code *Cnut II*, 74 (*Die Gesetze*, p. 360) appears to signal a change in such practices as it forbids the marrying off of women without their consent. However, the codification of this prohibition suggests that many women continued to be transacted in marriage agreements without having any say in the matter. Peter Coss has argued that this tract should be viewed not as a liberal breakthrough for the legal rights of women but as a political agreement between the kings and his nobles that signals an increasing royal involvement in aristocratic marriage transactions, see P. Coss, *The Lady in Medieval England 1000–1500* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998), pp. 16–17.

³⁷⁷ Clunies Ross, "Concubinage", p. 9, *ASW*, pp. 12–13. See also *WoE*.

³⁷⁸ R.M. Karras, "Servitude and Sexuality" in G. Pálsson (ed.), *From Sagas to Society: Comparative Approaches to Early Iceland* (Enfield Lock, Middlesex: Hisarlik Press, 1992), pp. 289–304, 300. Elbl has noted that a similar situation existed in the Portuguese settlements of East Africa during the fifteenth century, see I. Elbl, "Men without Wives: Sexual Arrangements in the Early Portuguese Expansion in West Africa" in J. Murray and K. Eisenbichler (eds.), *Desire and Discipline: Sex and Sexuality in the Premodern West* (Toronto/Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 61–86. Rossiaud has noted that during the fifteenth century the town authorities of South Eastern France controlled sexual access to prostitutes in order to emphasise hierarchy and maintain social harmony. See J. Rossiaud, "Prostitution, Youth and Society in the Towns of South Eastern France in the Fifteenth Century" in R. Forster and O. Ranau (eds.), *Deviants and the Abandoned in French Society from the Annales Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), vol. iv, pp. 1–46, 6–31.

households of the powerful who rewarded their followers with sexual access to their slave women and/or other women under their guardianship.³⁷⁹ *Landnámabók* supports this contention as it reveals that the women who were enslaved during Viking raids might be allocated to the individuals of a raiding party by lot. For example, the warrior Holmfast obtained Arneid, daughter of the Hebridean earl Asbiorn, in this manner following a raid on the Western Isles in 874.³⁸⁰ Furthermore, saga evidence suggests that during feasts women would be allotted to share a drinking horn with certain men whilst other men were left to drink alone.³⁸¹ Taylor has highlighted the significance of slave women, and indeed the sexual abuse of such women, for cementing and reinforcing the bonds between individuals within the Viking warrior fraternity.³⁸² He cites evidence from tenth-century Arab diplomat Ibn Fadlan, who described the customs and lifestyle of a band of Viking Rus warriors and traders operating on the Volga.³⁸³ Ibn Fadlan commented that these warriors would sexually abuse their slave women in a collective orgiastic manner noting that “One man will have sex with his slave-girl while his companion looks on. Sometimes a group of them comes to do this, each in front of the other.”³⁸⁴ The significance of such practices for fraternal group solidarity is further reinforced in Ibn Fadlan’s description of the highly ritualised funeral ceremony of a Viking Rus chieftan. During this ceremony one of the Chieftan’s slave girls ‘volunteers’ to be scarified and cremated alongside her master. His warriors then partake in a heady drinking binge whilst the allotted girl is obliged to visit the tents of these followers and have intercourse with each of them in one final ritualised gift of sexual access.³⁸⁵ Following this the girl is drugged, gang-raped tortured and then sacrificed.³⁸⁶ Taylor has interpreted this disturbing ritual in the following illuminating manner:

³⁷⁹ Karras, “Servitude”, p. 300.

³⁸⁰ *Ísland/Land*, vol. ii, p. 295.

³⁸¹ J. Jochens, “Sexuality”, p. 373.

³⁸² Taylor, “Ambused”, pp. 229–230.

³⁸³ For a full discussion of this source see M.L. Warmind, “Ibn Fadlan in the Context of his Age” in O. Crumlin-Pedersen and B.M. Thye (eds.), *The Ship as Symbol in Prehistoric and Medieval Scandinavia* (Copenhagen: Nationalmuseet, 1995), pp. 130–135.

³⁸⁴ Translation from Taylor, “Ambushed”, p. 230 see also T. Taylor, *The Buried Soul: how humans invented death* (London: 4th Estate, 2003).

³⁸⁵ “Ibn Fadlan, *The Funeral of the Rus-Chief*”, T. Sass (trans.) in Crumlin-Pedersen and Thye, *The Ship as Symbol*, pp. 136–137.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

...the entire rite was geared to presenting human sacrifice in terms of exclusion and identity. That the volatile and fragile *Männerbund* formation of the Rus Vikings, pervaded by deceit and treachery... was solidified for a time through communal rites of violent exclusion in which the dispensability and personlessness of slaves was adumbrated through a process of horrifically vicious disposal.³⁸⁷

Of course Ibn Fdla's account might be discounted as a one-off; the product of the over active imagination of an external observer from a very different culture. Yet, there are accounts of similar sacrifices from within the corpus of the Old Norse literature. In the mythical Eddic poem *Sigurdarkvida hin skamma* Brynhild urges her servant women to sacrifice themselves alongside her in the funeral pyres of the hero Sigurd. The introduction to *Helreið Brynhildar* also refers to five serving women and eight well born slaves being sacrificed on this occasion.³⁸⁸ A tale from *Landnámabók* relates how an early settler in Iceland, named Asmund Atlason, was said to have been buried in a ship mound with his thrall placed beside him.³⁸⁹ Ellis Davidson has highlighted that there is archaeological evidence for similar slave sacrifices in pre-Christian graves from both Scandinavia and early Anglo-Saxon England. These burials predominantly involve the apparent sacrifice of women to accompany the furnished graves of male warriors. A Viking grave excavated at Ballateare in the Isle of Man included the body of a cloaked middle aged man laid in a coffin, or burial chamber, accompanied by weapons. Higher up in the same burial mound, near a burnt layer of animal bones, lay the remains of a young woman with her skull broken by a blow and her arms raised over her head.³⁹⁰ In an early Anglo-Saxon grave from Mitcham, Surrey a small woman was laid face downwards between two males whilst at Finglesham Kent, a middle aged man was buried with grave goods and with a second body, possibly a woman, laid across him.³⁹¹ Moreover, a high status Anglo-Saxon female burial at Sewerby, East Yorkshire, included a second contemporaneous female

³⁸⁷ Taylor, "Ambushed", p. 230 see also Taylor, *The Buried Soul*, Chapter 7.

³⁸⁸ H. Ellis Davidson, "Human Sacrifice in the Late Pagan Period in North West Europe" in M.O.H. Carver, *The Age of Sutton Hoo: The Seventh Century in North Western Europe* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1992), pp. 331–342, 335.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 334.

³⁹¹ Ibid., p. 333. In addition, workman claimed that two smaller skeletons, presumed to be women, were found at the feet of a Viking warrior burial excavated in the nineteenth century at Donnybrook, Dublin, *ibid.*, p. 334.

burial. The second body, with arms and feet raised and with a piece of quern placed over her pelvis, was buried face down just centimetres above the first.³⁹² The deliberate inversion of a number of these ‘satellite’ burials is a practise which has been associated with the sacrifice of war captives in antiquity.³⁹³ This depositional positioning, along with lack of adornment/grave goods and the evidence of violence associated with these bodies, constitutes a physical and symbolic statement of lowly status, contempt and subjugation. These bodies were deliberately placed in juxtaposition to the primary burials in order to emphasise the dignified and honourable ‘ingroup’ status of the master/mistress inhumation. The example from Sewerby reveals that, even in intensely patriarchal societies, such ritualised expressions of power holding were not exclusively specific to men, a theme which will be explored in greater depth in the following chapter.

Leaders consolidated their position through grants of sexual access but they also did so by encouraging or granting licence to their men to assault and violate women who were under the guardianship of their rivals.³⁹⁴ In *Hallfreðar Saga* Hallfreðr told his warriors that they could do as they wished with the women of an opposing household.³⁹⁵ The author remarked that subsequently every man in the group found himself a woman for the night.³⁹⁶ Similarly, the twelfth-century chronicle attributed to Symeon of Durham notes that the Danish king, Swein Forkbeard (988–1014) had granted his men the right to plunder England and to

...cut the throat (regardless of pity) all of the male sex who might fall into their hands, preserve the females for gratification of their lust.³⁹⁷

³⁹² Ibid., p. 333.

³⁹³ M. Aldhouse-Green, “Semiologies of Subjugation: The Ritualisation of War-Prisoners in Later European Antiquity” in Otto and Vankilde, *Warfare and Society*, pp. 281–303, 288 and “Ritual Bondage”, pp. 159–160.

³⁹⁴ In the sagas *berserks* and other fearsome intruders always feel it is their right to have access to a household’s women, see J. Jochens, “Before the Male Gaze: The Absence of the Female Body in Old Norse” in Salisbury, *Sex*, pp. 3–30, 25, see also J. Jochens, “Illicit Love”, pp. 366–372 and Blaney, “Berserk Suitor”, p. 279.

³⁹⁵ *The Saga of Hallfred the Troublesome Poet*, *CSI*, vol. i, pp. 225–254, 244.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ “...quicquid masculini sexus in manus veniret, sine respectu misericordie jugularent, feminas ad suam libidinem explendam reservarent...”, *SMOO*, vol. ii, p. 144, translation from *A History of the Kings of England*, J. Stevenson (ed. and trans.) (Llanerch: Llanerch Enterprises, 1987, orig. 1858), p. 104. The same chronicler levelled similar criticisms against the Scottish warriors of his own lifetime see *SMOO*, vol. ii, pp. 36–38, 190–192.

Powerful men employed such strategies as a means to sustain a degree of control over their disruptive and volatile war bands. They therefore granted piecemeal sexual access to low status women under their control and, whenever possible, re-directed the sexual energies of their men towards the women of their enemies and rivals.³⁹⁸ This tactic reinforced group solidarity and identity; re-emphasised social hierarchy and reduced the internal threat posed by hotheaded young warriors towards both free and noble women within their own households or communities.³⁹⁹

It also appears that noblemen within medieval Scandinavian society positively encouraged their daughters to participate in brief sexual liaisons with royal figures thus revealing that the gift of sexual access might be reciprocated. Yet, such actions were not without purpose as the offspring of any such union might subsequently be used to promote family prestige through recognised blood connections with the ruling family.⁴⁰⁰ That similar practices existed in medieval Ireland may be inferred from the tale *Bórama* (the Tribute) which relates that an Irish high-prince named Cummascach was able to go on ‘a ‘free circuit’ of Ireland so that “he might enjoy the privilege of a night with the wife of every king of Ireland.”⁴⁰¹ Indeed, the medieval Irish tales clearly depict a society in which sexual hospitality was an expected benefit of the warrior class. The *Táin Bó Cúalnge* relates when the warrior Fer Baeth mac Fir Bend agreed to attack the hero Cú Chulainn he was rewarded with the company of princess Findabair who was placed by his side at the feasting table. The author of the *Táin* remarked that Findabair attended him well noting “she it is who pours goblets for him. She it is who kisses him at every drink.”⁴⁰² In the later tale, *Accallam na Senórach* (the Colloquy of the Ancient Men), the hero Finn sends his

³⁹⁸ Karras, “Desire”, pp. 20–24, Clover, “Politics”, pp. 112, 118–119.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., see also Bandlien, *Strategies*, pp. 67–85, Jochens, “Illicit”, pp. 357–392. Similar tactics were also employed by ruling municipal authorities to control the single men within certain colonial settlements during the later Middle-Ages, see S.M. Stuard, “Urban Domestic Slavery in Medieval Ragusa”, *JMH*, 9, no. 3, September, 1983, pp. 155–172, 165 and Elbl, “Men”, p. 68.

⁴⁰⁰ Jochens, “Politics”, p. 335, Bandlien, *Strategies*, p. 82.

⁴⁰¹ *Bórama*, *CoK*, pp. 103–114, 106. This tale appears to date to the tenth or eleventh century, *ibid.*, p. 103.

⁴⁰² ‘*Tucad ind ingen Findabair ara lethláim. Is í dories curnu faix. Is í dobeir phóic la cech n-óendíg dó. Is í gaibes láim for a chuit.*’ *TBC*, lines 187–1879, pp. 51, 190.

companion, Cailte, in search of lodgings in the ‘other world’.⁴⁰³ Cailte subsequently comes across a feast of twenty-eight young men “with a beautiful woman at the shoulder of each.”⁴⁰⁴ This would seem to suggest that feasting Irish warriors would have expected to be attended to by attractive serving women.⁴⁰⁵ The closing section of *Lebor na Cert* strongly suggests that the redistribution of sexual access was an accepted form of royal munificence as it states that at the great banquet at Tara “a maiden for every man shall be, jealous and slender.”⁴⁰⁶

An anecdote from the fourteenth-century Scottish chronicler John of Fordun suggests that powerful Scottish men would have also expected to have unlimited access to their female servants. In his *Chronicle of the Scottish Nation* Fordun reconstructed a conversation that had allegedly taken place between Malcolm Canmore (1058–1093) and a loyal nobleman named MacDuff whilst Canmore was in exile prior to his ascension of the Scottish throne. In the course of this conversation MacDuff pleaded with Malcolm to return to Scotland and reclaim his patrimony. Malcolm subsequently tested MacDuff’s true resolve by arguing that he was unwilling to return because he suffered from an uncontrollable vice, namely,

...a marvellous pleasure in detestable lust, which is rooted in my flesh; and you would not believe what a seducer of maids and women it makes me. And I feel sure, that were I to get my sovereign power, I could not forebear violating the beds of my nobles, and deflowering maidens.⁴⁰⁷

MacDuff is said to have replied that this vice would hardly be a problem because as king of Scotland Malcolm would command unlimited power over many lowly females. As a result he would “...be able to

⁴⁰³ This tale is extant in a fourteenth-century manuscript but appears to have originally been composed during the twelfth century *Acallamh na Senórach*. *Irish Texts* 4, pt. 1, W. Stokes and E. Windisch (eds.) (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1900). See Nagy, *Wisdom*, pp. 4–5.

⁴⁰⁴ ‘... 7 atchonnare ochtur ar .xx. óclach isindara leith don tigh 7 ben chaem chennálaind ar gualaind gach fir díb...’ *Acallamh*, lines, 5024–5033, p. 137, translation from, Nagy *Wisdom*, pp. 38–39.

⁴⁰⁵ “The otherworld, as it appears here and in most other tales about it, is very much like this world. Both realms have the same kind of social structure... the same set of social values (hospitality is appreciated everywhere)... Cultural activities such as feasting, music making, and warring are essential to both worlds.” see Nagy, *Wisdom*, p. 39.

⁴⁰⁶ “...ingen aetuma cach fir édach taebthana I Temair”, *LnC*, pp. 132–133.

⁴⁰⁷ *CSN*, vol. ii, pp. 184–185. “*Quorum utique primum est detestande libidinis miranda carne radicata voluptas, incredibilem me virginum corruptorem ac mulierum efficiens. Unde veraciter, scio, quod dominandi potestate suscepta, nobilium violando thoros, virginum raptus non vitarem.*”, *Scoti-chron.*, vol. ii, lib. v, pp. 2–3.

have, at will, the fairest maidens and the most pleasant women to glut thy wanton lust.”⁴⁰⁸ Although Fordun’s account of this conversation is certainly fabricated, at the very least, it provides an illuminating insight into his perceptions concerning the behavioural traits of early medieval Scottish rulers. It may equally constitute a veiled critique of the Scottish rulers of his era.

The somewhat earlier Welsh tales of the *Mabinogion* suggest that a similar system of patriarchal hospitality prevailed in medieval Welsh society. For example, *Culhwch ac Olwen* relates that when the hero Culhwch arrived at the court of king Arthur he was advised to proceed to a hospice where he would be provided with ample food and drink and “a woman to sleep with” (“*Gwreic y gyscu gennyf.*”)⁴⁰⁹ We have already seen that the eleventh-century Welsh prince Gruffudd ap Cynan permitted his men license to ravage the women of Arwystli in the aftermath of the battle of Mynydd Carn.⁴¹⁰ A verse composed by Gruffudd’s grandson, Hywel ab Owain Gwynedd, in around 1170 clearly reveals that access to multiple sexual partners was something that contemporary Welsh noblemen proudly associated with their position of power. The verse entitled *Gorhoffedd Hywel* (Hywel’s Boast) relates:

I had a girl of the same mind one day;
 I had two, their praise is greater;
 I had three, and four, and fortune:
 I’d five of them, their white flesh lovely;
 I had six, and sin not avoided;
 Clear white they sought me on top of a fort;
 I had seven and toil persisted;
 I’d eight to pay for the praise I sang them.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁸ *CSN*, vol. ii, p. 187. “*Numquid et tu rex existens ad tuam explendam libidinis luxuriam, pulcherimas regni virgines ad libitum ac placidissimas habere poteris mulieres?*”, *Schotichron.*, vol. iii, lib v, pp. 6–7. Following this statement, Malcolm realised that he could count on MacDuff’s unconditional support and he, therefore, admitted that his tales of sexual depravity were merely a ruse with which to test the nobleman’s loyalty. For a further comment on patriarchal systems in medieval Scotland see T. Thomson, *A History of the Scottish People from Earliest Times* (London: Blackie, 1894), p. 159.

⁴⁰⁹ *CaO*, line 97, p. 4, for translation see Jones and Jones, *Mabinog*, p. 98.

⁴¹⁰ See p. 126, above.

⁴¹¹ ‘*Cefais fun dduun ddiwrnawd;
 Cefais ddwy, handid mwy eu molawd;
 Cefais dair i a phedair â ffawd;
 Cefais bump o rai gwymp eu gwynngnawd;
 Cefais cwech heb odech pechawd;*

The twelfth-century commentator William of Malmesbury seems to have felt that Anglo-Saxon kings had commanded sexual access to their subject's daughters in a manner similar to that suggested by Jochens for Scandinavia. William relates the following interesting anecdote about the late tenth-century English king Edgar (944–975):

King Edgar, so they say, on arriving at Andover, which is a town near Winchester, gave orders that a certain nobleman's daughter, whose reputation for beauty had become widespread, should be brought to him. The girl's mother disdained to have her daughter treated as a concubine. Assisted by the cover of darkness, she sent to sleep with him a slave girl, who was a virgin not without some elegance and charm. When the night was over and dawn was breaking into daylight, the woman tried to get up, and when asked why she was in such a hurry, replied that she must fulfil the daily task that she owed her mistress. When restrained though with difficulty, she fell at the king's feet, bewailing the miseries of her present status and begging him, in return for their night together, to give her back her freedom; it was to be expected of his generosity, she said, that one who had shared the king's pleasures should groan no longer under the commands of cruel masters. At this his temper flared up, and with a terrifying laugh (for his mind was in turmoil with pity for the slave-girl on the one hand and indignation against her mistress on the other), and as though breaking into jest, he excused her of regular duties and her punishment. Soon she was mistress of her ancient masters, whether they would or no: he raised her to a position of high honour, and loved her and her only, remaining faithful to her alone as his bedfellow until he took Ordgar's daughter Ælfhryth as his lawful wife.⁴¹²

Gwenglaer uwch gwengaer ydd y'm daeraed;

Cefais saith, ac ef gwaith gorddygnaed;

Cefais wyth yn nhâl pwyth; peth o'r wawed yr daint...

Gorhoffedd Hywel ab Owain, The Oxford Book of Welsh Verse, T. Parry (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), p. 27, translation taken from *Welsh Verse*, T. Conran (ed. and trans.) (Bridgend: Poetry Wales, 1986), p. 147.

⁴¹² “*Rex inquit, Edgarus ueniens Andeueram, qui est uicus non longe a Wintonia, cuiusdam ducis filiam, cuius formae fama percrebruerat, adduci precepit. Mater puellae, quae concubinatum filiae dedignaretur, ancillam adiuta noctis tenebris cubili apposuit, uirginem sane nec inelegantem nec illepidam. Euoluta nocte, cum aurora in lucem prorumperet, mulier conata surgere, interrogataque quid festinaret, ad opus cotidianum dominae persoluumdum respondit; egre licet retenta regis genibus super statu miseriarum suarum applorat: pro mercede conubii redderet ingenuitatem; decere magnanimitatem eius ut regiae uoluptatis conscia dominorum crudelium ulterius non ingemisceret imperia. Tunc ille felle commoto, et formidabile ridens, cum in animo eius fluctuaret hinc de famula misratio, hinc de domina indignatio, quasi in iocos effusus usum obsequiorum penamque remittit. Max antiquis dominatoribus uellent nollent dominatem magna sullimauit dignatione; dilexit unice, integram lecti uni deferens fidem, quod legitimam uxorem accepit Elfridam filiam Ordgari.*” *GRA*, pp. 258–261.

This anecdote may well be an exaggerated version of a not unusual liaison which occurred between the Anglo-Saxon king and a slave concubine. Nevertheless, we know that Edgar expressed and expanded his power using traditional strategies of resource polygyny. He married at least three times; subsequently 'putting away' his previous spouses after each new union. In addition, he is said to have abducted his third wife, Ælthryth and then murdered her husband, Æthelwold of East Anglia.⁴¹³ At the very least, William of Malmesbury's account provides a fascinating insight into the way in which he perceived Anglo-Saxon rules regarding sexual hospitality. William therefore understood that Edgar's royal position would have provided him with sexual access to the offspring of his noble subjects. His account also suggests that this 'certain' Anglo-Saxon noble man, like his Scandinavian counterparts, recognised the dynastic advantages of such a union and was therefore willing to grant this royal figure sexual access to his female offspring. Indeed, in a culture for which the male guardianship of women was directly related to an individual's honour and power, the father's silence is clearly suggestive of his acquiescence to the Edgar's wishes (or at the very least, an apparent unwillingness to refuse his request). It is interesting, therefore, that it was the girl's mother, not her father, who actively opposed the liaison. The mother's substitution of an attractive slave girl for her noble daughter provides a further indication of the close association between slave women and sexual hospitality. This noble mistress was subsequently punished for her deceitful behaviour and for failing to fulfil her obligation of providing a suitable sexual partner for the king. This was achieved by the raising of her slave to a position of social superiority. William of Malmesbury expressed no surprise that Edgar would have wished to emphasise his virility and expand his lineage through this practise of resource polygyny. Moreover, this account illustrates how closely the legitimate wife, the noble concubine and the lowly slave girl might be associated within the medieval mindset. It is also, perhaps, indicative of the potential agency of female slaves who

⁴¹³ See *GRA*, pp. 257–259, *ByS*, pp. 35–39, *CJW*, pp. 416–417. Stafford has argued that claims regarding Edgar's sexual depravity are a product of over exaggerated twelfth-century accounts. Nevertheless she admits that Edgar's many marriages created intense rivalry at the English court, see *Unification and Conquest* (London: Edward Arnold, 1989), pp. 52–53.

might employ both emotional and sexual strategies in order to significantly improve their social status.⁴¹⁴

It has already been alluded that noblemen regarded all women within the lower orders of society to be sexually accessible to them.⁴¹⁵ This generalised conception stemmed directly from the assertions of masculine dominance inherent in the master/slave relationship. Control over the slave's procreative capabilities and sense of sexual identity were, therefore, fundamentally important tools in the process of subjection of all dependents, both free or servile. As Stuard has put it

...in a world of rights and obligations shaded hierarchically from the most to the least privileged, domiciled slaves were useful because they stood below all others.⁴¹⁶

The exertion of total control over every aspect of the slave's body was an essential element for triggering the psychological 'shame-humiliation affect' that facilitated the process of subjection.⁴¹⁷ Such control undermined any sense of self esteem and emphasised that the slave's identity was totally subsumed to the identity of his/her master.⁴¹⁸ It was no coincidence, then, that a slave's total lack of legal rights meant that his/her body could be used or abused in any way according to the whim of their master. This was especially significant with regard to control over the slave's sexuality, indeed, such control might be emphasised using a number of strategies. Clearly, one of the most powerful of these was through violent sexual assault. Women were frequently raped at the outset of their enslavement in order to instil terror and to emphasise their new dishonourable status. The continuing existence of such practices in early eleventh-century England were highlighted by

⁴¹⁴ Similarly, the seventh century Merovingian queen Balthild, wife of Clovis II and an ethnic Anglo-Saxon, was said to have been an ex-slave, see D. Edel, "Early Irish Queens and Royal Power: A First Reconnaissance" in M. Richter (ed.), *Ogma: Essays in Celtic Studies in honour of Próinséas Ní Chatháin* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2001), pp. 1–19, 15.

⁴¹⁵ For other examples see, K. Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), Rossiaud, "Prostitution, Youth", pp. 1–46, C. Klapsch-Zuber, "Women Servants in Florence during the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries" in B. Hanawalt (ed.), *Women and Work in Pre-industrial Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 56–80, M. Goodich, "Ancilla Dei: The Servant as Saint in the Late Middle Ages" in J. Krishner and S.F. Wemple (eds.), *Women in the Medieval World* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), pp. 119–136.

⁴¹⁶ S.M. Stuard, "Ancillary Evidence for the Decline of Medieval Slavery", in *P&P*, cxlix, 1995, pp. 3–28, 13.

⁴¹⁷ See chapter 1, Philips, "Slavery and Evolution", p. 14.

⁴¹⁸ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, pp. 12–29.

Archbishop Wulfstan II of York who complained that English women were being sexually abused and then sold abroad to heathens.⁴¹⁹ Just over a century later, during the first half of the twelfth century, Richard of Hexham complained that Scottish warriors had raped and then enslaved English women following a raid on Northumbria.⁴²⁰ A handful of sources suggest that newly enslaved males might have also suffered similar sexual abuse.⁴²¹ Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester (1010–1095) is said to have vigorously campaigned against the sale of both young girls *and boys* who had been sexually abused by slave traders in Bristol.⁴²² Furthermore, an eleventh century satirical poem attributed to the Norman ecclesiast Warner of Rouen, reveals how, an Irishman name Moriuh, was similarly mistreated. Warner's poem notes that soon after Moriuh was captured by Scandinavian raiders he was "subjected to insults and then in place of a wife he is forced by the Vikings to perform the sexual service of a wife."⁴²³ Warner's comparison of the unfortunate Moriuh to a wife interestingly reveals how his enslavement was associated with a loss of control over his own body thus denoting his symbolic feminisation. This feminisation although instigated by Moriuh's newly degraded status was also clearly conceptualised by Warner within the context of wider patriarchal order and categorisation.

In addition, to outright sexual assault, control over unions between slave men and women was another significant strategy employed by masters to ensure their total control over their slave's sexual identity. The male slave's inability to protect the sexual integrity of his female partner clearly signalled his total lack of honour and prowess; therefore highlighting his inability to exercise any vestige of patriarchal

⁴¹⁹ *SLAA*, pp. 57–58.

⁴²⁰ *De Gestis Regis Stephanie et Bello Standardii, Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, R. Howlett (ed.) (London: Longman, 1884–1889), vol. iii, p. 157. In around 1075 Adam of Bremen similarly noted that the Danes would "sell women who have been violated", *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, p. 190. Origa has noted that many of the female slaves arriving in Tuscany during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had been made pregnant because they had been raped during their voyage of transit, "The Domestic Enemy", p. 333.

⁴²¹ This was probably especially so in relation to young boys and adolescent youths. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 27.

⁴²² *VWWM*, p. 43 translation in Swanton, *TLLE*, p. 126.

⁴²³ "*Subditur obprobriis et tunc pro coniuge Danis. Coniugis officium cogitur esse suum.*" Warner of Rouen, Moriuh: *A Norman Latin Poem from the Early Eleventh Century*, C.J. McDonough (ed. and trans.) (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1995), pp. 76–77. This text is discussed more fully in chapter 3.

authority.⁴²⁴ The denial of the slave's right to form a meaningful family group or sexual relationship was further emphasised by the constant threat of separation from their partners and/or family. Slave unions were strictly monitored and might be broken up at any time by their master's command. This is made clear by the Anglo-Saxon *Penitential of Theodore* which states that a master might enforce a marriage and then separate this union by manumitting one of the parties.

If the master of a male and female slave joins them in marriage and the male slave or the female slave is afterward set free, and if the one who is in slavery cannot be redeemed, the one who has been set free may marry a free born person.⁴²⁵

Such enforced 'marriages' would appear to be strikingly analogous to the processes of female control and reward that were occurring at higher levels of society.

Strict control was also maintained over the offspring of slave unions who were undoubtedly used as means to reinforce the master's hegemony. Indeed, the threat of family separation was probably one of the most powerful incentives for slaves to remain obedient as their children might be sold, at any time, on a whim to a new master. Paradoxically, favoured offspring might be pampered and even freed while their parents remained in servitude. The Anglo-Saxon wills illustrate that a master or mistress had the power to separate a slave family in this way. Wynflæd, a Wessex noblewoman who drew up her will in around 950, bequeathed a number of her slave families intact to her relatives. Yet, others, who were presumably less favoured, she chose to separate. For example, Wynflæd bequeathed to Eadgifu "Eadwyn and Bunele's son and Ælfhere's daughter" whilst Ælfhere's younger daughter was bequeathed to her relative Æthelflæd.⁴²⁶

The master's absolute control over the procreative abilities of the slave was further reinforced by the hereditary nature of the condition. The *Penitential of Theodore* states that "If anyone sets free a pregnant slave woman, the child which she brings forth shall be (in a state) of

⁴²⁴ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 27.

⁴²⁵ "Si servum et ancillam dominus amborum in matrimonium conjunxerit, postea liberato servo vel ancilla, si non potest redimi qui in servitio est, libero licet ingenuo conjungere." *CED*, vol. iii, p. 202 translation taken from *MHP*, pp. 211–212.

⁴²⁶ *Will of Wynflæd, ASW*, p. 15. For further examples see the *Will of Æthelgifu*. See also Stuard, "Ancillary", p. 13.

slavery.”⁴²⁷ Furthermore, “If anyone acquires (as a slave) a free woman who is pregnant, the child that is born of her is free.”⁴²⁸ Hereditary ‘conceptualisations’ of slave status remained enshrined in medieval English common law for centuries. The *Leges Henrici Primi* (The Laws of Henry I) is an extensive law code compiled during the monarch’s reign (1100–1135). This code reiterated many pre-existing Anglo-Saxon legal clauses but, it also attempted to rationalise the vernacular material and incorporate certain continental innovations.⁴²⁹ Given that many noblemen and ecclesiastics owned domestic female slaves, it seems likely that the slave paternity clauses included in these laws continued to have relevance for English society in this period. Clause 77. 1–2 states that

If anyone is born of a father who is a slave and of a mother who is free, he shall be paid for, if slain, as a slave on his father’s side, because the status established by birth is determined always by the father, not the mother. If his father is a freeman and his mother is a slave, he shall be paid for, if slain, as a freeman, whether he is an Englishman or not, and if no reason appears to prevent his remaining a freeman.⁴³⁰

Despite some significant conceptual differences over status transmission, both the earlier penitential texts and the later law codes clearly regarded slavery as a stigma that was passed on by blood.⁴³¹ According to both, an individual’s status, be it freedom or servitude, was decided at the very moment of their conception.

A similar situation may be inferred from an eighth-century Irish law code that states that the son of a slave woman could never become a nobleman because ‘his vices are like his mother’s.’⁴³² In addition, Skene

⁴²⁷ “*Qui ancillam pregnantem liberat, quem generat servitutis... Si pregnantem mulierem quis liberam comparat, liber est ex ea generatus.*” *CED*, vol. iii, p. 202, translation from *MHP*, p. 212.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁹ P. Wormald, *The Making of English Law; king Alfred to the Twelfth Century* (Oxford; Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), pp. 411–414.

⁴³⁰ “*Di quis de seruo patre natus sit et matre libera, pro seruo reddatur occisus in ea parte, quia semper a patre, non a matre, generationis ordo textitur... Si patur sit liber et mater ancilla, pro libero reddatur occisus, si sit Anglicus uel non sit, et n[ichil] interueniat cur remaneat.*” *LHP* 77.1, 77.2, p. 243.

⁴³¹ The *Leges Henrici Primi* recognition of status transmission on the paternal side clearly does represent a significant shift from the more usual transmission of slave status through the maternal blood line. Indeed, this shift may well correlate with the wider reform objectives discussed in chapter 4 which sought to diminish the temptation to sexual sin and the associated desire to propagate more slaves posed by female slave ownership.

⁴³² *CIH*, 233.10–1, see also Kelly, *Guide*, p. 96.

has suggested that notions of hereditary servility were important in medieval Scottish society.⁴³³ The Welsh *Llyfr Cyfnerth* contains a code which clearly reveals the significance of the condition of slavery for reinforcing notions of ethnic and cultural belonging. This states that an innate *bonheddig* (Welsh freeman/noble) should be "...a Welshman by mother and by father, without slave and without alien (blood) and without one sided pedigree in him."⁴³⁴ Legal proclamations such as these undoubtedly arose out of necessity. The sexually accessible nature of the slave's status must have resulted in slave women being frequently impregnated. Such liaisons were undoubtedly often brutal. Yet, no legal conception could exist for the rape of a slave woman by her master because she was considered to be his property.⁴³⁵ Most slave women must have had little choice but to acquiesce in the sexual overtures of their owners.⁴³⁶ Nevertheless, evidence from the Norse sagas suggests that slave women taken from the communities of medieval Britain might have deliberately attempted to express their contempt for their master through passive resistance and in compliant behaviour. For example, the author of *Droplaugarsona Saga* felt that when Arneid, daughter of Asbiorn earl of the Hebrides, was abducted and enslaved in 874 she had expressed her dishonour through recalcitrant and mournful behaviour.⁴³⁷ Furthermore, she concealed a large fortune from her captor which she subsequently bestowed upon Ketil Thrymer who redeemed her and took her as his wife.⁴³⁸ *Laxdæla Saga* relates that an Icelandic noble named Hoskuldr purchased an enslaved Irish princess, Melkorka, and subsequently slept with her.⁴³⁹ Melkorka accepted Hoskuldr's sexual advances but expressed her shame through passive resistance by refusing to speak to him.⁴⁴⁰ In depictions of seduction scenes between

⁴³³ W.F. Skene, *Celtic Scotland* (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1880), pp. 220–222.

⁴³⁴ *Llyfr Cyfnerth* is found in a fourteenth-century redaction of an original lawbook composed in Maelienydd (Radnorshire) during the final quarter of the twelfth century. "*Kymro vam tatwyd bonhedig canhwynawl heb gaeth a heb alltut a heb ledach yndaw.*" *Welsh Medieval Law*, A.W. Wade Evans (ed. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), lines 9–10, p. 44. Translation taken from Charles-Edwards, *Kinship*, p. 173.

⁴³⁵ Karras, "Desire", p. 18.

⁴³⁶ This is made clear from William of Malmesbury's tract quoted above. See also Karras, "Servitude", p. 293.

⁴³⁷ *The Saga of Droplaug's Sons*, *CSI*, vol. iv, chapter 1, pp. 355–356. The account given in this saga is a thirteenth-century embellishment of an earlier twelfth-century account found in *Landnámabók*.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁹ *The Saga of the People of Laxardal*, *CSI*, vol. v, chapters 12 and 13, pp. 10–13.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

free men and women in Icelandic sagas the terms for ‘conversation’ or ‘talking together’ provide a clear euphemism for sex. So although Melkorka’s lowly position meant that she was clearly forced to sleep with Hoskuldr her refusal to ‘speak’ to him may have been used by the author to further emphasise her defiance and her innate or hidden nobility.⁴⁴¹ Similarly, Walter Map, a writer from a very different cultural milieu, relates that following Eadric the Wild’s fabled abduction of an otherworldly female he took her with him and “used her as he would yet could not wring a word from her. She yielded quietly to his will.”⁴⁴² A refusal to communicate may have often been the female slave’s only means of defiance in the face of the master’s violent sexual domination. It therefore seems possible that, in the face of violence and sexual abuse, certain slave women withheld intellectual contact in an attempt to retain some honour and psychological independence. The author of *Laxdæla Saga* clearly used Melkorka’s silence as a device with which to set her apart from more obedient female slaves. Her incomppliance appears to have been regarded as a sign that she “had the obvious air of distinction about her...that she was no fool.”⁴⁴³ Unsurprisingly, it seems that the pregnancies arising from such dishonourable unions were often unwanted on the part of the mother. The Old Irish *Vita St. Ciaran* relates that a virgin named Bruinech was abducted and raped by Dimma, the king of Cenel Fiachach. Bruinech subsequently became distraught when she discovered that she had become pregnant by her attacker and appealed to Saint Ciaran who took pity upon her and miraculously aborted the foetus.⁴⁴⁴

Draconian controls concerning the enslaved individual’s procreative capabilities were not restricted to the female sex. As already noted

⁴⁴¹ Bandlien, *Strategies*, pp. 76–77.

⁴⁴² “...et ea pro uoto tribus diebus et noctibus usus, uerbum ab ea extorquere non potuit; passa tamen est consensu placido uenerem uoluptatis eius.” DNC, pp. 156–157.

⁴⁴³ “Öllum mönnum var auðætt stórmennskumót á henni ok svá þat, at hon var engi afslápi.” *Íslendinga Sögur*, vol. iv, G. Jónsson (ed.) (Akureyri, Iceland: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1953; edn. Reykjavík, 1978). Translation from *CSoI*, p. 12.

⁴⁴⁴ *The Life of Ciaran of Saighir in Bethada Náem nÉrenn, Lives of Irish Saints*, C. Plummer (ed. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), vol. ii, pp. 99–108, 101. This *Vita* appears in a seventeenth-century redaction of an earlier medieval manuscript. Similarly, Klapisch-Zuber has noted that during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the slave women of Florence had to submit to their master’s sexual advances and this resulted in a prolific number of unwanted infants being abandoned to foundling hospices, see “Women Servants in Florence during the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries” in Hanawalt, *Women in Preindustrial Europe*, pp. 56–80, 70.

no legal conception existed for the rape of a slave by her master. However, the ninth-century West Saxon *Laws of Alfred* stated that if a male slave raped a female slave then “castration shall be required as compensation.”⁴⁴⁵ This not only indicates the significance of control over the male slaves’ sexuality but also, reveals that powerful notions of sexual jealousy existed in Anglo-Saxon society. If a male slave defiled a female slave then this constituted a potentially catastrophic threat to his master’s honour and authority. The severe punishment of castration was inevitably prescribed for such a rebellious act as it violently re-emphasised the social feminisation of the slave through his physical emasculation. Within all the societies of medieval Britain a woman’s chastity was closely related, not only, to her guardian’s honour, but also, to the honour of her entire family or kin group. Indeed, a set of twelfth-century laws attributed to William the Conqueror reveal any contravention of a family’s sense of sexual honour might have violent repercussions for the transgressors:

If a father finds his daughter in adultery in his own or in his son-in-law’s house, he shall have full permission to slay the adulterer(s)...if a son finds his mother in adultery during his father’s lifetime, he shall have permission to slay the adulterer(s).⁴⁴⁶

Similarly, the Welsh law code *Llyfr Cyfnerth* notes the shame that would be brought upon the kindred of a woman who had been abducted and raped.⁴⁴⁷ Furthermore, the twelfth-century hagiographical text *The Life of St. Malachy* reveals the behaviour that might be expected of the male relatives of a rape victim. St. Malachy was a twelfth-century Irish bishop and a close friend of Bernard of Clairvaux who composed this account following Malachy’s death in around 1149. Given that the author knew his subject personally then it seems plausible that the incidental detail given in this *Vita* may be taken as a fair representation of the violence created by systems of patriarchal honour and jealousy in twelfth-century Irish society. The text relates that whilst he was in the Irish city of Cloyne, St. Malachy came across a man who was consorting with his brother’s concubine. The saint chastised the

⁴⁴⁵ “Gif ðeowmon þeowne to nedhæmde genede, bete mid his eowende.” *Alfred* 25.1, *Die Gesetze*, p. 64.

⁴⁴⁶ “Si le pere truveit sa fille en avulterie en sa maisoun u en la maisoun soun gendre, ben li laist ocire l’avultere...[Similiter si filius matrem in adulterio deprehendit, pater vivente, licet adulterium occidere.]” *The So-Called Laws of William I*, 35 & 35.1, *Die Gesetze*, p. 514.

⁴⁴⁷ *ALIW*, vol. i, p. 779.

man for his adulterous behaviour but the offender was unrepentant and subsequently expressed his contempt for the saint by raping the woman. When the woman's brothers learned about the sexual assault perpetrated against their sister they immediately rushed out and slew her assailant, piercing him with many wounds upon the very spot where he had committed his crime.⁴⁴⁸

Adulterous and promiscuous women clearly undermined male guardianship and raised doubts regarding paternity. Such women threatened patriarchal control to its very foundations and were often punished with brutal severity.⁴⁴⁹ In a letter to King Æthelbald of Mercia (d. 757), the eighth-century ecclesiast Boniface related that it was the custom amongst the Old Saxons for adulterous women to be driven from village to village suffering torrents of abuse and beatings; then following this the offending women were forced to commit suicide.⁴⁵⁰ Boniface appears to have regarded contemporary English practices, generally, to have been somewhat more lenient.⁴⁵¹ Nonetheless, even by the early eleventh-century the Anglo-Saxon law codes were still prescribing fairly severe punishments for unfaithful women, indeed *Cnut II*, 53 states:

If, while her husband is still alive, a woman commits adultery with another man and it is discovered, she shall bring disgrace upon herself, and her lawful husband shall have all that she possesses, and she shall lose both her nose and her ears.⁴⁵²

The facial mutilation of the adulteress was presumably intended to prevent her from attracting further illicit suitors. It also provided a clear deterrent to other potentially promiscuous wives. The medieval Icelandic

⁴⁴⁸ *The Life of St. Malachy of Armagh*, A.J. Luddy (ed. and trans.) (Llanerch: Llanerch Enterprises, 1994), pp. 88–90.

⁴⁴⁹ Clunies Ross, "Concubinage", pp. 9–10.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., see *S. Bonifatii et Lullii epistolae*, M. Tangl (ed.) (Berlin: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae selectae, 1916–52), 5 vols, i (2nd edn. 1955), no. 73, p. 150, ll. 5 ff.

⁴⁵¹ Clunies Ross, "Concubinage", p. 10.

⁴⁵² "*Gif be cærcum ceorle wif hi be oðrum were forlicge, 7 hit open weorðe, geweorðe heo to woruldsceame syððan hyre sylfre, 7 hæbbe se rihtwer eall þæt heo ahte, 7 heo polige nasa 7 earena.*" *Cnut II*, 53, *Die Gesetze*, p. 348, translation from *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, A.J. Robertson (ed. and trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), pp. 202–203. The Welsh legal code *Llyfr Cyfnerth* states that if a virgin "goes clandestinely with a man against the will of her father and her mother and her lord, they can take her back against her will." "*Or a morwyr wyra yn llathrud heb gygor y chenedyl ythaf adichawen yhatwyr nac yguer ae hanuod ac nychyll dim oe hiaun ygan ynebae duc a nythal ythaf y hamohyr yr arglwyd*" *ALIW*, vol. i, p. 518 translation from Jenkins, *LHD*, p. 52.

law code *Grey Goose* (*Grágás*), which dates from the early twelfth century, specified six categories of women whom a male guardian had the right to kill if caught in the act of committing adultery, these included his wife, daughter, mother, sister, foster daughter and foster-mother.⁴⁵³ Similarly, the Old Irish law code *Bretha Crólige* makes it clear that there was no liability due for a guardian who inflicted injuries upon a promiscuous woman.⁴⁵⁴ In medieval Welsh law feminine promiscuity was considered to be an extremely dangerous crime liable to create violent tensions between kindred groups:

If it happens that a woman commits a gross offence, whether giving a kiss or allowing fondling or copulation with her, that is *sarhaed* (an insult) to her husband. If intercourse with her happens, that *sarhaed* is augmented by one half, for it derives from kin feud.⁴⁵⁵

The most serious charges that could be levelled against women were those of a sexual nature. These might include acts of incest, bestiality, adultery, promiscuity or of sleeping with an enemy.⁴⁵⁶ Furthermore, that enemy did not necessarily have to come from outside the household. The often intimate nature of slave owner's relationships with their female slaves appears may have stimulated concerns regarding the sexuality of their male slaves. This appears to have resulted in paranoid and emotive worries concerning the vengeful nature of such slaves; concerns that were clearly a product of the cultural suppression of the male slave's virility and masculinity. As a result male slaves were undoubtedly considered to be a serious internal threat to the free women, and indeed slave women, of the household. We have already seen such fears expressed within the ninth-century legislation of King Alfred.⁴⁵⁷ Furthermore, although free women could own male slaves they were certainly not permitted to copulate with them.

⁴⁵³ Clunies Ross, "Concubinage", p. 10, *Grágás*, vol. i, p. 154. Similar judgements can be found in other Germanic law codes see A. Arjava, "The Survival of Roman Family Law after the Barbarian Settlements" in R.W. Mathisen, *Law, Society and Authority in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 33–52, 41 and P.D. King, *Law and Society in the Visigothic Kingdom* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 234.

⁴⁵⁴ Kelly, *Guide*, p. 134.

⁴⁵⁵ "Oderuyt egureyc gueneutaur kaflauan debrit ae rodhi chussan yhur [arall] ae gadael ygouessiau ay hemreyn saraet ehu gur eu hene. Os chemreyn aderuyt esaraehet honno aderkeuyr ar vod e haner en vuy kanyz okenedel helenyaet et henyu." *ALIW*, vol. i, pp. 86–87, translation from Jenkins, *LHD*, p. 48. See Pryce, *Native Law*, pp. 139–140.

⁴⁵⁶ C.J. Clover, "Regardless of Sex: Men, Women and Power in Early Northern Europe", *Speculum*, vol. 68, 1993, pp. 363–387, 373.

⁴⁵⁷ See above.

In order to explore this point in more detail it is worth digressing, for a moment, to examine some parallel concerns from the the late Roman context. In Roman society marital unions in which women were of significantly higher rank and standing than their husbands were generally discouraged and disapproved of.⁴⁵⁸ A man was supposed to be the head of his household, consequently unequal unions of this sort were thought to undermine the superior authority of the *paterfamilias*.⁴⁵⁹ The most extreme example of this kind of social imbalance occurred when there was a union, either sexual or marital, between a free woman and a male slave. Such unions were viewed as an abhorrent affront to patriarchal hierarchy and, as such, were policed vigorously because they threatened to blur the vital distinctions between the conditions of freedom and slavery.⁴⁶⁰ Unions between free women and slaves owned by others were regarded as bad enough, but for the woman who consorted with her own slave the consequences were even direr. The fourth-century laws of Constantine provide an example of the fate which might await such a mistress and her slave lover:

If any woman is revealed to have dealings with (her) slave in secret, she shall undergo a capital penalty, and the worthless scoundrel shall be handed over to the flames. Let all have the opportunity to denounce the public crime, let all have the power to announce it to the authorities, let even a slave have license to bring information, to whom freedom will be given once the crime has been proven, although for a false accusation a penalty threatens.⁴⁶¹

This edict is particularly interesting because it reveals how all free Roman citizens, and also slaves too, were expected to uphold the

⁴⁵⁸ J. Evans-Grubbs, "Marriage More Shameful than Adultery": Slave-Mistress Relationships, "Mixed Marriages," and Late Roman Law", *Phoenix*, xlvii, 2, Summer 1993, pp. 125–154, 126.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Although generally frowned upon, unions between free women and male slaves owned by another party do appear to have occurred at the lower levels of Roman society. Nonetheless, the first century provisions of the *Senatusconsultum Claudianum* state that when such unions occur the woman would have to give up her free status and become the slave of her partner's owner. The rules concerning relationships between free women and slaves were far more vigorously enforced with regards to women of higher status, especially those who were consorting with their own slaves, *ibid.*

⁴⁶¹ "Si qua cum servo occulte rem habere detegitur, capitali sententia subiugetur tradendo ignibus verberone, sitque omnibus facultas crimen publicum arguendi, sit officio copia nuntiandi, sit etiam servo licentia deferendi, cui probate crimine libertas dabitur, cum falsae accusationi poena imminet." It should be noted that Constantine's codes in this respect were a reaction to a perceived blurring of social boundaries in the preceding period, *ibid.*, pp. 143–144, 152–153.

boundaries between freedom and slavery and actively participate in the processes of subjection. The severity of the punishment meted out to the offenders of this 'sex crime' is indicative of the somatic conceptualisation of slavery in Roman culture.⁴⁶² Those who dominated were not permitted to submit themselves sexually to a servile individual because in doing so they would be relinquishing their power in both a corporeal and social sense. It was considered acceptable and normal, then, for male slave holders to express their power over their slaves, either male or female, through sexual penetration. Yet, for a free man to be the passive partner in a union with a male slave would have been unthinkable. For a free woman such a passive role was even more prohibitive because it contravened the norms of both hierarchy and gender. The penetration of free bodies by slaves therefore represented both a physical and symbolic inversion of social order.⁴⁶³

Evidence from the so called Barbarian law codes laws suggests that such slave/mistress unions were similarly viewed as a significant threat to patriarchal order in early medieval Germanic societies. Given that a number of these law codes were heavily influenced by late Roman law then this may seem unsurprising.⁴⁶⁴ Yet, these codes also contain significant customal Germanic elements too, especially with regards to compensation payments in relation to an individual's honour price and social status. Consequently, they also have a great deal in common with the early Anglo-Saxon and Welsh laws; deriving from similar customary traditions and cultural contexts.⁴⁶⁵ The Frankish *Lex Salica* (Salic Law), extant in a late eighth-century manuscript but, originally composed in the sixth century reveals little trace of Roman family law.⁴⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the code takes a hard line stance, similar to the fourth-century codes

⁴⁶² Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, pp. 9–30.

⁴⁶³ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, pp. 93, 96.

⁴⁶⁴ For example, Arjava has noted that the certain parts of the fifth-century *Lex Visigothorum* ('Law of the Visigoths') directly reflected late family Roman law, including edicts concerning sexual relationships between free women and slaves, see Arjava, "Survival", p. 36. See also R. Collins, "Law and Ethnic Identity in the Western Kingdoms in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries" in A.P. Smyth (ed.), *Medieval Europeans* (Ipswich: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 1–24, 1–5.

⁴⁶⁵ Jones has argued that the impact of late Roman law upon early Anglo-Saxon and Welsh legal traditions was negligible see M.E. Jones, "The Legacy of Roman Law in Post-Roman Britain" in Mathisen, *Law*, pp. 52–67.

⁴⁶⁶ Arjava, "Survival", p. 37, K. Pearson, "Salic Law and Barbarian Diet" in Mathisen, *Law*, pp. 272–286, 272, R. Collins, *Early Medieval Europe 300–1000* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1991), p. 161.

of Constantine, in respect of unions between free women and their male slaves. Indeed, Clause *XXV, IV* states that any woman discovered having sex with her family's slave could be put to death on the spot with impunity.⁴⁶⁷ The laws also state that if a free woman married someone else's slave then she would have to give up her freedom and all her property to her husband's master.⁴⁶⁸ The seventh century *Leges Alamannorum* (Laws of the Alamans) also issue condemnatory edicts in respect of such unions.⁴⁶⁹ Clause *VIII, 9* of this code states that if a man's slave fornicated with a free woman then he must hand that slave over to the woman's relatives to be slain.⁴⁷⁰ The ineffectual slave owner was not required to pay any compensation because he was regarded as being sufficiently punished by the deep dishonour that such an action would have brought upon him.⁴⁷¹

There is very little evidence for such illicit slave/mistress liaisons in the sources of medieval Britain. This may be unsurprising given the intense dishonour that such actions would have brought upon their male guardians. Nevertheless, it appears likely that such unions must have occurred. Concerns about mistress/slave unions are voiced in an excerpt from the Welsh law tract *Lyfr Iowerth*. This was compiled in the early thirteenth century in Gwynedd and is preserved in four manuscripts from the period 1250–1300.⁴⁷² *Lyfr Iowerth* notes that during a particularly drawn out conflict the men of Arvon were forced to remain in arms for such a long period that "...their wives slept with their slaves."⁴⁷³ As a result their leader, Run (who was said to be the son of the legendary sixth-century Welsh king Maelgwyn) granted them fourteen privileges which included being given precedence over receiv-

⁴⁶⁷ See *The Laws of the Salian Franks*, K. Fischer Drew (trans.) (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), xxv, 4, p. 87, see Wemple, "Consent", p. 232. Similarly, the sixth century Frankish historian Gregory of Tours related that when the Ostrogothic princess, Amalasuntha, took her slave as her lover she came to a cruel end in a boiling bath of steam. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, 2 vols., O.M. Dalton (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927), vol. ii, book iii, chapter 31, pp. 107–108.

⁴⁶⁸ *LSF*, xxv, p. 87.

⁴⁶⁹ This code is found in an eighth-century manuscript, although it was probably composed during the reign of the Merovingian king Clothar II (613–629) see *The Laws of the Alamans and the Bavarians*, *VIII*, 9, p. 139.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁴⁷¹ The laws note thenceforth all the people would despise both him and his slave, *ibid.*

⁴⁷² Charles Edwards, *Kinship*, pp. 13, 259.

⁴⁷³ "Ac ena rac hid etrikassant en elluyd ekeskus eu guraket can eu gueysson *kaet*." *ALIW*, vol. i, pp. 104–105.

ing a new wife (“[*yu*] *rackuys rac gureyc.*”)⁴⁷⁴ Concerns that illicit unions with slaves might result in a dangerous blurring of social distinctions were not uncommon within the societies of medieval Britain. This is exemplified in an Old Irish composition entitled the *Poem of Prophecies*.⁴⁷⁵ This warns of the catastrophic consequences that would result from the mixing of free and slave blood noting that

...all will deem their marriage alliances to be slavery...Neither slave-woman nor lively slave will be obedient, humble, if one looks into his mind, to the powerful, to Lords.⁴⁷⁶

Despite their intense disapproval of female promiscuity, male guardians appear to have positively encouraged sexual jealousy between the free women and the slave women in their households. Indeed, the presence of wives, concubines and slave women in a single household, many of whom had produced offspring by the same man, must have created an atmosphere of rivalry, intrigue and factionalism. Such situations are also clearly evident in medieval Irish literature. For example, in the *Vita Prima Sanctae Brigidae* Dubthach, the saint's father, impregnated his slave concubine to the consternation of his legitimate wife and her brothers. The *Vita* relates that when Dubthach's wife learned that he had been sleeping with his slave girl,

...she was sorely aggrieved and said to her husband, “Cast out this slave and sell her lest her offspring surpass my offspring”...Then in a rage his wife together with her brothers urgently pressed Dubtach to sell the slave girl in a distant region.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 106–107.

⁴⁷⁵ *A Poem of Prophecies*, E. Knott (ed. and trans.), *Eriu*, vol. xviii, 1958. This *Poem* appears in a late fourteenth-century manuscript, but has been originally dated to around the mid-twelfth century. It was not a single composition but rather a compilation of stanzas from at least two original documents.

⁴⁷⁶ “...broid mor la cach a cleamnus,
logh gu brath ar bretheamnus...
Nibia cumal na modh mear
go humal, go hiriseal,
ge fedhadh neach na menmain,
do threnail, do thigernaibh”

PoP, pp. 72–73.

⁴⁷⁷ “Dubhtaci contristata est Valdè, & dixit viro suo: eijce & vende istam, ne progenies ipsius meam superet... Tunc vxor irata cum fratribus suis vrgebat valde Dubthacum vt venderet ancillam in regionem longinquam.” *Trias thaumaturgae*/J. Colgan (ed.) (Dublin, 1997, Facsimile reprint of 1647 ed. Louvain: Corneliu Coenestenu) translation from Connolly, *VSPB*, pp. 14–15.

This legitimate wife's concerns for her offspring are particularly revealing as sibling rivalries were often encouraged by mothers and step-mothers who were anxious to advance their own sons against their husband's children by other unions. Yet, despite the pressure exerted on Dubthach he "refused to sell the maid since he loved her very dearly" although, eventually he was forced to part with her because of the danger posed to her by his jealous spouse and her relatives.⁴⁷⁸ Similarly, in the tale *Echtra mac N-Ehach Muigmedóin* (The adventures of the sons of Eochu Muigmedón) the hero, Niall, was the product of a union between his royal father, named Eochu, and his slave girl, Cairenn. The young lad's life subsequently came under threat because of the jealous wrath of the king's wife, Mongfind, who forced Cairenn into harsh labour.⁴⁷⁹ In spite of the disruptive portrayal of such conflicts the competition created by unions with slaves and concubines appears to have enabled men to undermine the position of free women and, therefore, facilitated the reinforcement of patriarchy.⁴⁸⁰ As Bitel suggests,

Even in feminine space, then, social forces driven by male solidarity and men's rules worked to damage some relationships among women and ensure their reliance on male guardians.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ The tale relates that Mongfind, Eochu's wife "hated Niall and his mother, and inflicted much hardship upon Cairenn, who was compelled to draw water from the well. Even when she was pregnant with Niall she was compelled to do it, and the child was born in the open as she lay beside her pail. She dared not take up the child, but left it there, and none dared take it up for fear of Mongfind." See *EmNEM*, *CoK*, pp. 38–39.

⁴⁸⁰ This is made clear by the early Christian commentator Salvian of Marseille. Writing in Gaul in the fifth century, Salvian took a dim view of such master-slave relationships because he felt that they undermined the morals of the master and the position of the free women of the household. Despite this he states that such relationships were very common "[...in southern Gaul] the lady of the household certainly did not maintain her power unchallenged, because a woman whose rights as a wife have not been kept safe and unchallenged has not kept her rights over the household safe either. When the head of the household behaves like the husband of the slave girls, his wife is not far removed from the status of a slave. And was there any wealthy Aquitanian who did not behave like that?" *Salvian of Marseille, The Governance of God*, 7, 4, cited in T. Wiedemann (ed. and trans.), *Greek and Roman Slavery* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 179.

⁴⁸¹ Bitel, *Land*, p. 152.

Ingroup-Outgroup: Slaves and the Warrior Fraternity

It has already been noted that strong associations can be seen to underlie the relationship between the warrior fraternity and their victims. Many of the warrior heroes extant in the medieval Irish stories are, themselves, the product of illicit and impermanent unions with abducted or enslaved women.⁴⁸² Both Finn and Niall Noigiallach were said to have been born of such unions.⁴⁸³ In another twelfth-century Irish tale a princess, named Creidne, was raped by her father and then expelled from her community. Following this expulsion she begat several powerful warriors who formed into a *fian* band and violently ravaged their way back into society.⁴⁸⁴ The eleventh-century tale *Tochmarc Emire* (the Wooing of Emer) suggests that similar themes might have been extant within the sagas of Scotland.⁴⁸⁵ This story relates that, while he was receiving his military training in that region, the Irish hero Cú Chulainn raped a Scottish queen named Aiffe. He subsequently departed leaving only a name for his unborn son who would later return to Ireland as a warrior.⁴⁸⁶ Comparable tales also appear in the corpus of medieval Welsh literature. In *Math uab Mathonwy* two young warriors Gilfaethwy and Goewin were punished for their incestuous rape of king Math's maiden, by being banished from society and forced into a sexually abnormal relationship.⁴⁸⁷ They undertook this relationship in three animal forms, which relate directly to martial prowess: the deer (symbolising swiftness), the wild boar (symbolising brute strength) and the wolf (symbolising ferocity and cunning). The products of this abnormal relationship are said to have been "The three sons of false Gilfaethwy,

⁴⁸² McCone, *Pagan Past*, p. 193.

⁴⁸³ See Nagy, *Wisdom*, p. 19 and p. 121 n. 378, above. This motif was so significant that it was adopted within hagiographical tales. As we have seen, the *Vita Prima Sanctae Brigide* relates that St. Brigit, Ireland's foremost female saint was born into slavery following a union between her noble father and his slave concubine, *VPSB*, pp. 14–15. Similarly, St. Ailbe was said to have been born of an illicit union between the warrior, Olcnais, and one of king Conan's slave girls, *VSHSB*, p. 118.

⁴⁸⁴ This untitled tale is inserted in an early twelfth-century genealogical manuscript, see *Corpus Genealogicarum Hiberniae*, M.A. O'Brien (ed.) (Dublin: Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, 1962), vol. i, pp. 154–155; translation taken from Meyer, *Fiannaigecht*, pp. xi–xii. See also Nagy, *Wisdom*, pp. 46–47.

⁴⁸⁵ *Tochmarc Emire*, K. Meyer (ed. and trans.), *Revue Celtique*, xi, 1890, pp. 443–457. Admittedly this is an Old Irish tale, yet, as we have seen the two regions shared the Gaelic language and mythology.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 451.

⁴⁸⁷ Millersdaughter, "Geopolitics of Incest", p. 296.

three champions true.”⁴⁸⁸ In the eighth-century Anglo-Saxon poem *Deor*, Weland, a supernatural blacksmith who was enslaved by King Nithhad, took his revenge by raping the king’s daughter Beadohild. According to another eighth-century Old English poem *Waldere* the offspring of this violent union was the famous champion Widia.⁴⁸⁹

Members of the warrior fraternity exercised their voracious sexual appetite in order to emphasise their masculinity and virility. This resulted in them having prolific sexual unions often instigated through the rape, abduction and enslavement of women.⁴⁹⁰ The illegitimate offspring created by such unions must have been numerous and would, themselves, become prime candidates for warrior fraternity membership when they reached adolescence. Paternal absence has long been considered a contributory factor towards the kind of delinquent and anti-social behaviour so clearly related to the warrior initiate.⁴⁹¹ The marginal status of these warrior initiates may have been further emphasised by their illegitimate status. Yet, in spite of this, illegitimacy was clearly not considered to be a serious restriction for male warriors in the societies under discussion. It was the formal recognition of the status and privileges of kinship that was considered to be truly significant. Paternal acknowledgement, then, in conjunction with the attributes of martial prowess and intelligence were the necessary qualifications required for obtaining greatness in these societies.

The Irish law tracts suggest that a leader should be chosen by *febas* (personal excellence) rather than by lineage alone.⁴⁹² Gerald of Wales commented that Welsh society was plagued by violence because of a traditional custom that stipulated “that all their sons, both legitimate and illegitimate, insist upon taking equal shares in their patrimony.”⁴⁹³

⁴⁸⁸ “*Tri meib Giluaethwy enwir,
Tri chenryssedat Kywir*”

Mab uab Mathonvey, P.K. Ford (ed.) (Belmont, MA: Ford & Bailie, 1999), lines 281–282, p. 8. Translation from Jones and Jones, *Mabinog*, p. 63. See also chapter 3.

⁴⁸⁹ The rape of Beadohild highlights both the physical and supernatural threat posed by the enslaved male, see *ASWA*, *Deor*, pp. 7–9, *Waldere*, pp. 9–11.

⁴⁹⁰ Rossiaud has noted that similar behavioural traits existed within the youthful male groups of the South Eastern towns of France during the fifteenth century, see “Prostitution, Youth”, pp. 1–46.

⁴⁹¹ Ayres, “Bride”, p. 246.

⁴⁹² *TC*, p. 5, *CIH*, 1289. 15–19, see also Charles-Edwards, *Kinship*, pp. 97, 99–101, 106–108.

⁴⁹³ “*Quod paternum hereditatem filii inter se, tam naturales quam legitimi, herili portione dividere contendunt.*” *IK/DK*, lib ii, cap. ix, p. 225, translation from Thorpe, *JDW*, p. 273. The clear implication of this statement is that Gerald regarded his own society to be one

John of Fordun noted that in early medieval Scotland “it was not nearness in blood, but fitness as having attained to full puberty, that raised this or that man to the king’s throne.”⁴⁹⁴ Similarly, William of Malmesbury remarked that although the late tenth-century English prince Edmund Ironside (981–1016) was born of an illicit union between his father (Æthelred II) and an unknown concubine this would not have hindered the youth’s progress because “His father’s sloth and his mother’s low birth he would honourably have put in the shade by his own prowess.”⁴⁹⁵

The warrior fraternity clearly defined itself in opposition to the status of slavery.⁴⁹⁶ Yet, these two, apparently disparate, elements of society remained closely associated within the medieval psyche. Indeed, evidence from Anglo-Saxon England suggests that membership of such fraternities was not necessarily restricted to those untainted by slavery. For example, the career of the late ninth-century Northumbrian king, Guthred of York (d. 895), proved that it was possible for a recently manumitted slave to rise to the vaunted status of kingship provided he had the support of a large warrior fraternity (and a saint!).⁴⁹⁷ Moreover,

which adhered to the more peaceful custom of impartible inheritance. See J. Gillingham, “Some Observations on Social Mobility in England between the Norman Conquest and the Early Thirteenth Century” in A. Haverkamp and H. Vollrath (eds.), *England and Germany in the High Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 333–355, 339–342.

⁴⁹⁴ *CSN*, vol. i, p. 134. “*Non enim sanguinis proximitas sed perfecte pubertatis habilitas hunc vel illum regni trono sustulit ad regnandum.*” *Scotichron.*, vol. ii, pp. 268–269.

⁴⁹⁵ “...*id est Ferreum latus, nuncupatus, qui patris ingnauiam, matris ignobilitatem uirte sua premeret...*” *GRA*, pp. 312–313.

⁴⁹⁶ The eleventh-century English text the *Encomium Emmæ Reginae* is a panygeric composed for Emma, Queen of England (985–1052). It notes that in an invading army headed by Emma’s second husband, Cnut, “there was present no slave, no man freed from slavery...for all were noble...”, “...*nullus inueniebatur seruus, nullus ex seruo libertus...omnes enim erant nobiles...*”. See *Encomium Emmæ Reginae*, A. Campbell (ed. and trans.), Camden Society lxxii (London, 1949), pp. 20–21.

⁴⁹⁷ *Libellus de exordio atque procursu istius hoc est Denhelmensis ecclesie*, D. Rollason (ed. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 122–127. Guthred was a Danish individual who had been sold by his fellow countrymen to a widow at Whittingham. The *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto* relates that the saint appeared to Eadred, abbot of Carlisle, and told him to go to the Danish army and order them to redeem Guthred and make him their king. Surprisingly, this request was carried out and Guthred was crowned the ruler of York. Somewhat less surprisingly, he became a significant supporter of the Church of St. Cuthbert. Admittedly, in this tale, Guthred was not born into slavery but his capture and then sale to a female mistress were clearly employed to signal his descent into a dishonourable and lowly status. Guthred’s servile position thereby significantly emphasised the power of St. Cuthbert’s miracle. Indeed, only the saint, through God’s power, was capable of resurrecting the socially dead slave and then raising him into the

Archbishop Wulfstan II of York voiced serious concerns that escaped slaves were joining marauding bands of warriors, at the beginning of the eleventh century. Wulfstan noted with some consternation that these runaways were subsequently slaying thegns whose kin groups were unable to gain satisfactory compensation.⁴⁹⁸ The twelfth-century *Leges Henrici Primi* included legislation intended to combat similar marauding bands whether "...they may be slaves or freemen, in groups of one or the other or mixed up together, fugitives or not fugitives."⁴⁹⁹

It is difficult to imagine that such slaves remained under the control of their owners. It seems more likely that they had escaped from servitude and affiliated themselves with a brigand band. It appears likely that escaped or manumitted male slaves would have deliberately joined such fraternities as a means to reassert their prowess, honour and masculinity through the practice of rapine.⁵⁰⁰ The taking of arms, thereby, emphasised their newly acquired freedom and power. Such conceptions are clearly evident in the Anglo-Saxon manumission rituals. During these ceremonies the emancipated male slave would be symbolically 'remasculated' through the bestowal of weapons donated by his former master.⁵⁰¹ Similarly, the eighth-century continental historian Paul the Deacon remarked that the Lombards conferred weapons upon their emancipated slaves in order to increase the numbers of their warriors.⁵⁰²

Conclusions

Institutionalised systems of patriarchal honour, sexual jealousy and masculine purchase emphasised hierarchical order, cemented social

highest echelons, see also W. Aird, *St. Cuthbert and the Normans 1071–1153* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1998), pp. 30–32.

⁴⁹⁸ *SLAA*, pp. 47–67. For a further comment on Wulfstan's remarks see cap. 3, pp. 173–174. The mid tenth-century law code *Edmund III*, 4, also provides evidence that escaped slaves were being recruited within brigand bands, see *Die Gesetze*, p. 191.

⁴⁹⁹ "...servi uel liberi, diuisim uel permixtim, fugitiui uel non fugitiui...", *LHP I*, 59.22, pp. 188–189, see also 59.24, pp. 190–191.

⁵⁰⁰ Similarly, Origo has noted that in Tuscany during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries escaped slaves were frequently recruited by brigand bands, see Origo, "The Domestic Enemy", p. 322.

⁵⁰¹ See *Willelmi Articuli Londoniis Retractati*, 15.1, *Die Gesetze*, p. 491 and Pelteret, *Slavery*, pp. 131–136.

⁵⁰² *The History of the Lombards by Paul the Deacon*, W.D. Foulke (ed. and trans.) (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974), p. 21.

bonds and promoted solidarity between powerful men and their male followers. Yet, these same patriarchal systems also encouraged violence, internecine competition and caused intense social and political instability. Such problems are most visible when we examine the lifestyles of those men who were at the top of the social ladder. In the societies of medieval Britain, kings, earls and noblemen emphasised their power, social position and masculine hegemony through a sexual idiom. Their overwhelming desire to express their power and virility and to secure their lineage resulted in them propagating numerous offspring by many different partners. This, in turn, resulted in internecine strife and violent succession conflicts. The political landscape of medieval Britain seems to have been characterised by the potential for such factional instability prior to the twelfth century.

In medieval Welsh society reigns were frequently short and violent. The *Brut y Tywysogyon* portrays a society which was consistently plagued by factional family struggles, fratricides and joint or divided rules. The *Brut* relates that following the death of Gruffudd ap Cynan, king of Gwynedd, his sons Owain and Cadwaladr competed bitterly against one another for hegemony over their father's kingdom.⁵⁰³ Some years later Owain himself "deprived Cunedda ap Cadwallon, his nephew, his brother's son, of his eyes and his testicles."⁵⁰⁴ When Owain died in 1171 his son "Dafydd ab Owain slew Hywel ab Owain, his eldest brother."⁵⁰⁵ A similarly violent succession dispute followed the death of the Scottish king Malcolm Canmore in 1093. Malcolm's illegitimate son, Duncan, was murdered after he had succeeded in wresting the Scottish throne from Malcolm's brother, Donald Bán. In addition, it appears that Duncan's half-brother, Edmund, had a hand in this slaying.⁵⁰⁶ Following this, Donald Bán regained power but was subsequently blinded by his nephew, Edgar, who then he seized the throne of Scotland.⁵⁰⁷ The *Annals of Ulster* reveal that similar disputes were taking place in early twelfth-century Ireland. In 1121 the kinsmen of Gilla Escoip

⁵⁰³ See *ByT*, pp. 118–119. Similarly, Gerald of Wales remarked that Welsh society was plagued by internecine violence and bitter disputes between rival brothers and half brothers, see *JDW*, p. 273.

⁵⁰⁴ "...ysbeilawd Ywein Gwynedd Gunedda vab Catwallawn, y nei ap y brawd, o'e lygeit a'e ge[I]lleu." *ByT*, pp. 130–131.

⁵⁰⁵ "...ladawd David ap Ywein Hywel ap Ywein, y brawd hy naf idaw." *Ibid.*, pp. 150–151.

⁵⁰⁶ *GRA*, pp. 724–727, see also Duncan, *Scotland*, p. 125.

⁵⁰⁷ This succession dispute is analysed in detail in chapter 5. See also *C&N*, vol. i, pp. 134–135.

Eogain ua Aindiaraidh, king of Cianacht, killed him in the middle of the cemetery of Bennchor.⁵⁰⁸ Similarly, Donnchad son of Gilla Pátraic Ruad, king of Osraige was slain “by his own people” in 1123.⁵⁰⁹ In the following chapter, we will see that volatile internecine disputes also characterised Anglo-Saxon society during the first half of the eleventh century as concubines and queens competed to establish the rights of their royal offspring.⁵¹⁰

This close relationship between resource polygyny and social and political disorder was clearly recognised by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which sought to modify such behaviour. For example, during the first half of the eighth century, Bede complained to Egbert, Archbishop of York, that

There is a complete lack of places where the sons of nobles or of veteran thegns can receive an estate; and thus, unoccupied and unmarried, though the time of puberty is over, they persist in no intention of continence, and on this account they either leave the country for which they ought to fight and go across the sea, or else with greater guilt and shamelessness devote themselves to loose living and fornication, seeing they have no intention of chastity, and do not even abstain from virgins consecrated to God.⁵¹¹

Interestingly, similar complaints were voiced on the continent during the early years of the eleventh century. Indeed, the historian Dudo of St. Quentin made some extremely perceptive observations regarding resource polygyny, which are worth mentioning. Dudo wrote his *History of the Normans* for Duke Richard II of Normandy at the beginning of the eleventh century. The canon was particularly critical regarding the sexual mores of Richard’s Scandinavian forebears because he felt that they

⁵⁰⁸ *AU*, pp. 564–565.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 568–569. For other examples of internecine violence in Irish society see sa 1113, pp. 554–555, sa 1114, pp. 556–557 and sa 1126, p. 571. See also D. Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan; London: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 37–42.

⁵¹⁰ See chapter 3.

⁵¹¹ “...ut omnino desit locus, ubi filii nobilium aut emeritorum militum possessionem accipere possint: ideoque vacantes ac sine conjugio, exacto tempore pubertatis, nullo continentie proposito perdurent, atque hanc ob rem vel patriam suam pro qua militare debuerant trans mare abeuntes relinquant; vel majori scelere atque impudentia, qui propositum castitatis non habent, luxurie ac fornication; deserviant neque ab ipsis sacratis Deo virginibus abstineant.” ‘Letter from Bede to Egbert Archbishop of York’, *CED*, vol. iii, p. 320, translation from *EHD*, vol. i, 170, pp. 804–805.

... burn with too much wanton lasciviousness, and with singular depravity debauch and mate with as many women as they please; and so by mingling in illicit couplings they generate innumerable children. When these have grown up they clamour fiercely against their fathers and their grandfathers, or more frequently against each other, for shares of property; and, as they are over-many, and the land they inhabit is not large enough for them to live in, there is a very old custom by which a multitude of youths is selected by lot and expelled into the realms of other nations, to win kingdoms for themselves by fighting, where they can live in uninterrupted peace... Whoever takes up arms against them is cruelly done to death by them. The rest 'frigid in war', are led away captive. Wives are repeatedly raped, and lamentably led off for the stranger. The whole virgin sex is basely deflowered by those men. Far and wide, old men and young men are dragged into exile together. Whatever they find alive, they put up for sale. The mad frenzy grows madder, increased by many evils.⁵¹²

In Dudo's view, then, the practise of resource polygyny (and/or concubinage) in the Scandinavian homelands had resulted in the generation of 'innumerable children'. Interestingly, he appears to have felt that these children were predominantly males who later grew into warriors and clamoured "fiercely against their fathers and their grandfathers, or more frequently against each other". Research has suggested that the cultural imperative to produce male warriors was so powerful in early medieval Scandinavia that selective infanticide was practised through the exposure of female infants.⁵¹³ This, in turn, may have contributed to the significant gender ratio imbalance within the region's population, noted by a number of scholars.⁵¹⁴ A dearth of females in the population would have intensified male competition and reinforced the symbolic power and status conferred through the successful guardianship of

⁵¹² "*Hæ namque gentes petulanti nimium luxu exardescentes, feminasque quamplurimas singulari turpitudine stuprantes commiscendo, illinc soholes innumeras obscena illiciti connubii commistione patrando generant. Hi, postquam adoleverint, rerum pro possessionibus contra patres, avosque, aut sæpius inter se ferociter objurgati, fuerint exuberantes, atque terram quam incolunt habitare non sufficientes, collecta sorte multitudine pubescentium, veterrimo ritu in externa regna extruduntur nationum, ut acquirant sibi præliando regna, quibus vivere possint pace perpetua... Quisquis in illos arma sumit, interimitur crudeliter. Cætera gens armis frigida ducitur captiva. Uxores a pluribus stupratæ ducuntur flebiliter advenæ. Omnis puellarum sexus ab ipsis turpiter devirginatur. Cum juvenibus senes longe lateque trahuntur extorres. Quidquid est animalium redigunt in pretium. Crescit rabies furiosa, multis malis augmentata.*" *De Moribus et Actis Primorum Normanniæ Ducum*, lib. i, cap. ix, pp. 129, 131. Translation taken from *Dudo of St. Quentin*, Christiansen, pp. 15–17.

⁵¹³ Clover, 'Politics', pp. 100–133, N.L. Wicker, "Selective Female Infanticide as Partial Explanation for the Dearth of Women in Viking Age Scandinavia" in Halsall, *Violence and Society*, pp. 205–221.

⁵¹⁴ For a summary see Clover, "Politics", pp. 102, 114–119 and also Wicker, "Selective", pp. 205–221.

adult women.⁵¹⁵ It would have also acted as both a catalyst for the acquisition of women through abduction, slave raiding and warfare and stimulated the employment of rape as a political weapon designed to emasculate both enemies and rivals. Thus, as Dudo points out, the wives of his forebear's enemies were raped in order to dishonour their male guardians thus leaving them "frigid in war". Then, following this, both sexes, subjugated and shamed, were led away into captivity; the women, presumably, to suffer the experience of a life of coerced concubinage. The indiscriminately violent and frenzied nature of the warrior youths conducting these activities is made quite explicit.

Dudo's criticisms about the lascivious behaviour of his ancestors are in keeping with the sentiments of the eleventh-century reform movement. His comments may well have been intended as a thinly veiled critique of his contemporary secular elite.⁵¹⁶ Furthermore, his complaints might have been justifiably levelled at any of the communities within medieval Britain during his lifetime. This was because the behavioural traits he was criticising constituted a common cultural legacy inherited by Western European societies from the pre-Christian era. In spite of the dramatic social changes instigated by Christianity and the accompanying growth of centralised monarchy, the powerful significance of such mores for the construction of power, gender and social hierarchy had ensured their enduring validity. Dudo clearly understood the interconnected and cyclical nature of the social practices of his forebears. Indeed, he recognised that traditional systems of resource polygyny were intimately related to the perpetuation of the youthful warrior fraternity and a culture of warfare, in general, which was, in turn, intimately linked to the practice of sexual violence, female abduction and slave raiding which, in turn, fed back into traditional systems of resource polygyny.⁵¹⁷ When viewed from Dudo's perspective, then, concubinage, female abduction, the enslavement of captives and the virilization of the warrior initiate were all interconnected facets in the same system of patriarchy.

⁵¹⁵ Clover, "Politics", p. 119.

⁵¹⁶ It might be argued that Dudo's attitude provides evidence that Norman society had abandoned such traditional behavioural norms. Yet, as we shall see in chapter 4, Norman nobles continued to practice resource polygyny during the eleventh century.

⁵¹⁷ A point highlighted by Carol Clover who argues that "female infanticide, male warfare/absenteeism, and polygyny/concubinage fuel each other in an escalating syndrome." Clover, "Politics", p. 119.

By the eleventh century the ascetic ideals of the ecclesiastical reform movement had begun to permeate the societies of medieval Britain and Ireland. The reforming churchmen of this period appear to have realised that the promotion of legitimate succession could limit the internecine violence that was wracking these societies and facilitating the ravages of the warrior fraternity. Furthermore, they recognised that in order to achieve a more peaceful and stable society they must eradicate surviving pre-Christian sexual norms and reconfigure traditional systems of patriarchy from the top down. This would not be an easy task as resource polygyny and internecine violence had moulded the social, political and cultural landscape of medieval Britain and Ireland. During the eleventh century, kings and noblemen did begin to affiliate themselves with the Church's revised norms concerning monogamy and legitimacy. Nevertheless, traditional norms, which associated virility and masculinity with power continued to have a symbolic significance in the medieval communities of the British Isles. Moreover, while surviving pre-Christian systems of patriarchy continued to prevail, slavery would remain a powerful and dynamic cultural institution. As we shall see in the following chapter, slavery was an institution that was vital for the establishment and perpetuation of both social hierarchy and gender identity within these societies. It would take a drastic external invasion to significantly alter the traditional behavioural traits of the secular populations of Britain and Ireland. Ironically, the instigator of this invasion, William the Bastard, was to be the final illegitimate heir to ascend the throne of England.

CHAPTER THREE

SLAVERY, POWER AND GENDER

Power, Honour and Gender

Here before Lammas, God helping, Æthelflæd, the ‘Lady of the Mercians’ took possession of the stronghold which is called Derby, together with all that belonged to it; also four of her thegns, who were dear to her, were killed there inside the gates.¹

This entry for the year 917, taken from the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle C*, portrays a powerful and successful military commander with devoted warriors. This passage would be wholly unremarkable if it were referring to any of the sons of Alfred the Great yet it does not. In the following entry for 918 the *Chronicle* relates that Æthelflæd, Alfred’s daughter, went on from this victory to secure control over

...the stronghold at Leicester, and the most part of the raiding-armies that belonged to it were subjected. And also the York-folk had promised her—and some of them granted so by pledge, some confirmed by oaths—that they would be at her disposition.²

At first glance these entries would appear to be entirely at odds with the patriarchal society which I have been describing thus far. How was it possible, in a society which valued female possession and control so significantly, that entire armies and indeed territories of men could consider submitting to the over-lordship of a woman? How could any woman, no matter how significant her lineage, become a military commander in a world in which martial activity defined masculinity and feuding frequently revolved around sexual jealousy and a man’s ability

¹ “Her Æþelflæd Myrcna hlæfdige Gode fullumgendum foran to Hlæfmæssan begeat þa burh mid eallum þam ðe þærto hyrde þe ys haten Deoraby. Þær wæron eac ofslegene hyre þegna feowur ðe hire besorge wæron innan þam gatum.”, *ASC, MS. C*, 917, p. 76. Translation from Swanton, *ASC*, p. 101.

² “Her heo begeat on hire geweald mod Godes fullume on foreweardne gear gesybsumlice þa burh æt Ligraceastre, 7 se mæsta dæl þæs herges þe ðærto hirde wearð underþeoded; 7 hæfdon eac Eforwicingas hire gehaten, 7 sume on wedde geseald, sume mid apum gefestnod, þæt hi on hyre rædenne beon woldon.”, *ibid.*, p. 76. Translation from Swanton, *ASC*, p. 105.

to protect his women?³ Moreover, what, if any, bearing does this have upon our interpretation of the institution of slavery in the societies of medieval Britain?

If Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians, were the only example of such a powerful female figure then we might be able to explain her away as an unusual anomaly, yet she was not. Independent and authoritative women of Æthelflæd's type, although admittedly a rare phenomenon, existed within all the societies of medieval Britain.⁴ Furthermore, a closer examination of such women will provide us with a greater understanding of how notions of power and powerlessness were expressed and conceptualised in these societies. We have seen thus far that overt expressions of masculine prowess and virility were intimately related to a man's social standing and power. This would logically suggest that it would be extremely difficult, or even impossible, for a woman to attain any significant position of power independent of her male guardian. However, this does not always appear have been the case. Women were able to attain power, influence and independence in the societies of medieval Britain. Yet, they did so by operating within parameters dictated, very much, by normative masculine behaviour systems and symbols of status.⁵ As we shall see, this also has significant implications for our understanding of how these medieval societies perceived those individuals who were labelled as weak and powerless. This, in turn, will highlight the importance of slavery for defining the social and cultural order of these societies.

³ The passages already quoted from the *ASC* leave us in little doubt that Æthelflæd was the most significant military commander in Mercia during the first decades of the tenth century. F.T. Wainwright has argued that she was the leader of an even wider anti-Norse coalition in the North of England which comprised of English and Danish armies together with forces from Scotland and British warriors from the Strathclyde region, see "Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians" in H. Damico et al. (eds.), *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 44–55, 51. Similarly, Stafford has remarked that Æthelflæd "...was architect and leader of a great alliance of the kings and rulers of northern Britain, subduer of Welsh princes, Lady of the Vikings of York." P. Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers, The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1983), p. 118. See also H.M. Jewell, *Women in Medieval England* (Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 39.

⁴ For further examples see Bitel, *Women in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 46–94 and Stafford, "Powerful Women", pp. 398–415, Edel, "Early Irish Queens", pp. 1–19 and M. McLaughlin, "The Woman Warrior: Gender, Warfare and Society in Medieval Europe", *Women's Studies*, 17, 1990, pp. 193–209.

⁵ C. Clover, "Maiden Warriors and Other Sons", *JEGP*, 85, January, 1986, pp. 35–49, 48–49 and Clover, "Regardless", pp. 368–381.

Powerful women, like Æthelflæd, usually attained their positions of pre-eminence and autonomy through dynastic connections; by marriage, motherhood and/or lineage.⁶ Yet, once they had achieved such a position it was not unusual for them to express their status through the adoption of discernibly masculine characteristics. This appropriation of masculine traits can be directly related to the frenetic hyper-masculine behaviour, examined in the previous chapter, which is evident within all of the societies under discussion. Indeed, for these patriarchal societies power holding was defined and perpetuated by a constant desire to reaffirm one's position in society through expressions of prowess. Conversely, perceptions of slavery were intimately associated with ideas concerning social exclusion, shame, cowardice, effeminacy, homosexuality and physical weakness. Conceptions of power versus powerlessness were therefore expressed through normative gender attributes, symbols and stereotypes; power-holding being equated predominantly with masculinity/strength and powerlessness with femininity/submission. Yet, as Æthelflæd Lady of the Mercians reveals, such normative gender representations were culturally constructed and need not necessarily correlate to the biological sex of any given individual.

Depictions of powerful women who behaved in an aggressive and warlike manner had a long tradition in Western Europe ultimately dating back to accounts of Amazonian warriors in the literature of Greek antiquity.⁷ These conceptions are particularly visible in the Germanic literary tradition of the 'Valkyrie' or 'shield maiden'. Mythical female characters such as Brynhildr were depicted dressing in masculine warrior clothing and were praised for their aggressive appetite for conflict and for their prowess in battle.⁸ By far our richest source of evidence regarding these 'shield maidens' comes from the corpus of Old Norse sagas. It has already been noted that strong cultural affinities existed between Scandinavian society and the societies of medieval Britain.⁹ An examination of this Old Norse evidence will, therefore, provide a useful

⁶ Stafford, "Powerful Women", p. 402.

⁷ Clover, "Maiden Warriors", p. 36.

⁸ *Völsunga Saga* relates that Brynhildr "took up helmet and mail coat and went to battle", *Saga of the Völsungs*, Byock, chapter 24, p. 73. ("en Brynhildr fór með hjálm ok brynju ok gekk at vígum") Old Norse translation from *The Saga of the Völsungs*, R.G. Finch (ed. and trans.) (London: Nelson, 1965), p. 41. See also Meulengracht Sørensen, *Unmanly*, pp. 21–23, and J. Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), pp. 38–39, 87–113, 162–167.

⁹ See chapter 2.

parallel on which to base our analysis. In recent years several important studies have been conducted which have examined the phenomenon of the warrior maiden in the medieval Scandinavian literature. These studies provide a methodological model for approaching similar material from the societies of medieval Britain.¹⁰ The saga material does not provide us with a historically reliable picture of the powerful and independent women of medieval Iceland and Norway. Many of the accounts of shield maidens extant in the Old Norse sagas place these women within a mythical milieu or, at least, relate to activities which had taken place several hundred years before the sagas were written down. Nevertheless, these accounts can provide us with valuable information about how medieval Scandinavian society constructed ideas about gender and power. The Old Norse literature provides us with an insight into the 'conceptual universe' of the society in which it was formulated and highlights the 'underlying tensions' which were at play in that society.¹¹ As we shall see, this literary construction may have particular relevance to the societies of medieval Britain under discussion.

In almost every instance in which an Old Norse female behaved in an independent or aggressive manner the saga author depicted her adopting discernible masculine characteristics or traits. Furthermore, the saga accounts suggest that there were only a certain number of social situations in which such behaviour was deemed appropriate or necessary. *Laxdæla saga* relates that following a bitter conflict, Unnr Ketilsdóttir led her followers from Scotland to Iceland and established herself as an important local ruler there.¹² Unnr seems to have conducted herself in a manner which was normally more befitting of a male leader. Despite this, the saga's author appears to approve of this unusually authoritative female. The reason for this appears to be that during the conflict in Scotland Unnr's father, husband and son had all been slain.¹³ Unnr, therefore, acted with bravery and honour and adopted the behaviour and social functions of a male leader because there was no one else who could do so due to the loss of her male guardians.¹⁴ This suggests that the saga's intended audience would have understood and accepted

¹⁰ Clover, "Maiden Warriors", pp. 35–49 and "Regardless", pp. 358–371 and Meulengracht Sørensen, *Unmanly*, pp. 33–88.

¹¹ Clover, "Maiden Warriors", p. 36, Meulengracht Sørensen, *Unmanly*, p. 12.

¹² *LS*, chapters 5–7, pp. 4–7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, see also Meulengracht Sørensen, *Unmanly*, pp. 21–22.

¹⁴ Meulengracht Sørensen, *Unmanly*, p. 22.

that in such exceptional circumstances it was possible for a courageous woman to take the reins of power more usually grasped by men.

Saga Heiðreks konungs ins vitra (*The Saga of Heithrek the Wise*) provides a further example of the type of exceptional social circumstance in which such behaviour would be tolerated. The author relates how a fine warrior, named Angantýr, was slain in battle before his daughter, Hervör, was born.¹⁵ Hervör, Angantýr's only surviving child, subsequently grew up in her grandmother's household where she revealed a flare for using weapons. She later took to a life of crime and dressed and armed herself as a man in order to rob people. Following this period of delinquency she joined and then assumed control of a male Viking band and set out with them to find the resting-place of her father. Interestingly, Hervör's quest for validation by her father was instigated by a taunt from a slave whom she had mistreated. This slave questioned Hervör's parentage insulting her with the claim that she had been fathered by the "basest slave."¹⁶ Such an insult would have been considered extremely serious in Norse society because it carried deeply emotive connotations of shame and dishonour associated with hereditary servility and submission. As an authorial device, it was of course further exaggerated by Hervör's biological sex which, under normal circumstances, would have been conceptually associated with powerlessness. This was further amplified by the fact that it had been uttered by a dishonoured and powerless individual. For any warrior such an insult would require immediate redress through firm and direct action demonstrating a reassertion of both prowess and honour. For Hervör this meant embarking on her paternal quest and appropriating power through overt expressions of masculine behaviour. Indeed, she assumed a male name, *Hervarðr*, and demanded that her mother should equip her "as a son."¹⁷ The female warrior subsequently discovered her father's grave and then argued with Angantýr's ghost because it refused to bestow the family sword, Tyrfingr, upon her. Yet, despite these initially violent protestations this paternal spirit eventually recognised his daughter's ability to assume power and

¹⁵ The prefix *Her-* in the name *Hervör* meaning 'warrior' or 'army', see R. Cleasby and G. Vigfusson, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 258.

¹⁶ "*því at inn verstí þrell lagðisk með dóttur hans, ok ertu þeira barn.*" *Saga Heiðreks konungs ins vitra/The Saga of Heiðrek the Wise*, C. Tolkien (ed. and trans.) (London/New York: Nelson, 1960), pp. 10–12.

¹⁷ "*sem þú son mundür*", *ibid.*, p. 12. See also Jochens, *Images*, p. 99. The suffix *varðr*, literally meaning 'guard'.

conceded to her demands wishing her “twelve men’s lives”.¹⁸ She then returned to her Viking way of life until she finally married and had two sons.¹⁹ This fascinating saga reveals that when lineage was threatened due to a lack of male heirs then it was conceptually acceptable for a daughter to assume the role of a son; “...so powerful is the principle of male inheritance that when it necessarily passes through the female, she must become, in legend if not in life, a functional son.”²⁰ Hervör’s acquisition of power was notably emphasised through overt expressions of normative masculine behaviour to the extent that she was admitted to and assumed leadership of a traditional warrior fraternity.²¹

Jochens has highlighted evidence for the existence of such Scandinavian female warriors in both the non-literary historical sources and the archaeological record.²² Furthermore, a dictum from the Icelandic law tract *Grágás* suggests that the conceptual principles encoded in the sagas might have also been adhered to in reality. *Grágás* relates that there were variable legal permutations regarding who should receive the main ‘ring’, i.e. the bulk of an individual’s wergild (blood compensation), if that individual were to be slain. The law code states that

There is also one woman who is both to pay and to take a wergild ring, given that she is an only child, and that woman is called “ring lady”.

¹⁸ “*tólf manna fjör*”, *ibid.*, pp. 14–19.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21.

²⁰ Clover, “Maiden Warriors”, p. 39 and Jochens, *Images*, p. 99.

²¹ Anthropologists have noted the existence of similar behavioural traits in certain women in Albanian society during the twentieth century. These women remained ‘sworn virgins’ and acted and dressed in a masculine manner by carrying weapons and keeping exclusively male company. Moreover, these anthropological accounts have noted that Albanian society, like medieval Icelandic society, remained extremely decentralised and was based upon clan organisation and the concept of blood feud. The reasons given for the behavioural patterns of such ‘sworn virgins’ are threefold. First, a young woman who wished to avoid an arranged marriage that was unacceptable to her, could adopt this masculine role in order to reject her suitor without sparking an inter-family feud. Secondly, a father without any sons could prevail upon his daughter to adopt such behaviour in order that he would be able to pass his inheritance on to her, as he would have done to a son. Thirdly, if all of a woman’s male guardians had been slain then it was socially acceptable for her to pursue revenge and blood feud provided that she adopted such a masculine persona. See I. Whitaker, “A Sack for Carrying Things: The Traditional Role of Women in Northern Albanian Society”, *AQ*, 54, 1981, pp. 146–156 and M. Edith Durham, *Some Tribal Origins, Laws and Customs of the Balkans* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1928), pp. 194–195, see also Clover, “Maiden Warriors”, pp. 43–45.

²² These include a certain ‘Red Maiden’ who commanded a Viking fleet in the Irish Sea and a female warrior burial from Norway, for these and other examples see Jochens, *Images*, p. 108.

She who takes is the daughter of a dead man if no proper receiver of the main ring otherwise exists but atonement payers are alive, and she takes the three mark ring like a son, given that she has not accepted full settlement in compensation for the killing, and this until she is married, but thereafter the kinsmen take it. She who pays is the daughter of the killer if no proper payer of the main ring otherwise exists but receivers do, and then she is to pay the three mark ring like a son until she enters her husband's bed and thereby tosses the outlay into her kinsmen's lap.²³

This dictum suggests that in the event of her father being slain and in the absence of any other male relatives it was possible for an only daughter to participate in the, normally exclusively masculine, world of vengeance and compensation. Moreover, if she did so then it is made clear that in the eyes of the law she would be acting, not as a daughter but, as a son.

The pursuit of vengeance appears to have been another social instance in which it was acceptable for a woman to dress in warrior attire and behave in a violent manner. Under normal social circumstances women were unable to extract revenge unless it was through the actions of their male guardians.²⁴ Despite this, their guardians do not always appear to be particularly eager to pursue violent retribution. In such instances women might behave in an extremely provocative and aggressive manner cajoling and insulting their men into taking action.²⁵ This was an expected behavioural norm and did not contravene their feminine role. However, in certain extreme circumstances it was also possible for a woman to take matters of vengeance into her own hands.²⁶ For example, if a woman had no male guardians to avenge her, or if her guardians failed to pursue a feud which affected her status, then it was conceptually acceptable for her to take up arms and gain retribu-

²³ "Sú er ok kona ein er bæði skal baugi bæta ok baug taka ef hon er einberni. En sú kona heitir baugrygr. En hon er dóttir ins dauða, enda sé eigi skapþiggjani til hofuðbaugs en bætendr lifi, þá skal hon taka þrímerkling sem sonr, ef hon tók eigi full sætti at vígsbótum til þess er hon er gípt; enda skulu frændr álengr taka. Nú er hon dóttir vegaða, en eigi er skapbætendi til bætendi til hofuðbaugs, en viðtakendr sé til, þá skal hon bæta þrímerklingi sem sonr til þess er hon komr í vers hvílu; en þá kasatar hon gjöldum í kné frændum." Grágás: Íslendernes lovbog i fristatens tid, vol. i, V. Finsen (ed.) (Kjøbenhavn: Brødrene Berlings bogtrykkeri, 1852–[1970]), pp. 200–201, translation from Grágás, vol. i, pp. 181, 261. "A wergild ring was the atonement to be paid by a member of a killer's family to the corresponding member of the family of the man killed."

²⁴ Meulengracht Sørensen, *Unmanly*, p. 21.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 20–21, 40 and Clover, "Regardless", p. 368. For a full discussion of avenging women and their strategies see Jochens, *Images*, pp. 132–161.

²⁶ Meulengracht Sørensen, *Unmanly*, pp. 21–22.

tion for herself. This is indeed what happens in a scene from *Laxdæla saga*. The saga relates that a woman named Auðr was insulted by her treacherous husband's adultery, yet her attempts to incite her brothers into avenging this insult fell upon deaf ears. She therefore donned a pair of men's breeches and armed with a sword she set out to slay her offending spouse.²⁷ Such behaviour meant trouble for the men in both camps. It stigmatised her guardians with the shame of inaction and cowardice whilst her offender had to face the dishonourable position of being attacked by a woman.²⁸ Despite this the saga author reveals that no shame fell on Auðr for taking such action. She was simply attempting to fulfil a social obligation which her guardians had failed to correctly observe.²⁹

There is one other significant circumstance in which the sagas depict women adopting aggressive masculine behaviour and that is in the portrayal of the 'maiden queen' who violently rejects all potential marriage suitors.³⁰ This type of behaviour is primarily associated with females who exist at the very top of the social hierarchy, which may help to explain why it features more prominently in mythical tales rather than in the socially grounded family sagas. The central premise of this theme is that a powerful princess or queen arms and dresses as a man and staunchly defends her chastity by dealing out extreme violence towards any man who attempts to woo/sleep with her. Such tales often involve a male hero who eventually manages to tame the 'maiden queen'. The hero usually accomplishes this through the act of sexual intercourse/rape; an act which, thereafter, transforms her into a loyal wife thus feminising her behaviour.³¹ A clear conceptual message is encoded in this scenario: if a woman wished to attain an autonomous position of power and leadership over men then she must adopt appropriate masculine traits. These might include warrior style dress and a display of the normative masculine qualities of aggression

²⁷ *LS*, chapter 35, pp. 47–50.

²⁸ Auðr subsequently inflicted a serious chest wound upon her husband, Þórðr. Ósvífr, Þórðr's new father-in-law, offered to ride after and capture Auðr in order that she should answer for her crime. Despite the seriousness of his injury, however, Þórðr was ashamed that he had been overcome by a woman and wanted no such retribution, *ibid.*, p. 49. See also Meulengracht Sørensen, *Unmanly*, p. 76.

²⁹ The injured party, Þórðr, himself noted that Auðr had "only done what she had to do" ("Þórðr kvað þat fjarrí skyldu fara; sagði hana slíkt hafa at gert, sem hon átti."), *LS*, p. 49. See also Meulengracht Sørensen, *Unmanly*, p. 22.

³⁰ Clover, "Maiden Warriors", p. 41.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 40–43.

and prowess discussed in the previous chapter. Yet, even she did adopt these qualities the woman would still be biologically and anatomically female. She would not, therefore, be able to express her power by participating in traditional displays of virility and rapaciousness in the way that powerful men were almost culturally obliged to do. Rather, her autonomy and power must depend upon her sexual continence. Indeed, if she were to submit herself sexually to any man then this would be an admission of that man's physical/social dominance and her physical/social submission.³² 'Maiden queens', therefore, displayed their power by jealously defending their virginity and chastity with violence. In a sense, they were their own male guardians and this is a point to which I shall return in a short while.

What these portrayals of powerful women suggest is that although Old Norse society was intensely patriarchal, placing a very high value upon masculine prowess and warrior-hood, power holding within that society did not necessarily correlate with biological gender. Women, like men, could act with authority and independence provided that they followed certain behavioural norms which were defined by a normative masculine template.³³ Powerful women were therefore not conceptually limited in their ambitions and were able to rise to dizzying heights within the social hierarchy. Equally, weak men were also liable to fall to the very bottom of the social order. Clover has perceptively observed that

The frantic machismo of Norse males, at least as they are portrayed in the literature, would seem on the face of it to suggest a society in which being born male precisely did *not* confer automatic superiority, a society in which distinction had to be acquired, and constantly reacquired, by wresting it away from others.³⁴

³² It is made clear in the law tract quoted from *Grágás*, above, that the woman would lose her rights to participate in the wergild system when she "enters her husband's bed" ("til þess er hon komr i vers hvílu").

³³ Clover, "Regardless", pp. 367–379. The opposite was also true, indeed, in *Kjalme-dinga saga* the male character Búi unusually refuses to take arms and his mother orders him not to be "weaponless as women" "*slyppr sem konur*", see Jochens, *Images*, p. 109.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 377–380. Similarly, Cooper and Leyser have argued that in late Roman society biological gender was considered to be unstable and susceptible to influence from external factors. They, therefore, feel that gender "... was regarded as a provisional marker of social identity—always under contest, always in need of affirmation." See K. Cooper and C. Leyser, "The Gender of Grace: Impotence, Servitude and Manliness in the Fifth Century West" in P. Stafford and A.B. Mulder-Bakker (eds.), *Gendering the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 6–21, 8.

The saga literature suggests that Old Norse society was defined by the set of 'winnable and loseable attributes' that were expressed primarily through key symbols associated with masculinity and warrior-hood. Yet, although power was characterised through these masculine symbols, being male was by no means a pre-requisite for holding power. It appears that individuals defined their position within society, not by biological gender, but rather by degrees of strength and weakness, power and powerlessness, honour and dishonour, and indeed one might argue, by degrees of freedom and slavery.

We will now turn our gaze toward medieval Britain and examine whether similar behavioural norms and conceptual frameworks are observable in the societies that are under discussion. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* account concerning Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians, appears to provide us with tangible historical evidence of a power holding woman adopting masculine behaviour within Old English society. Yet, the patriarchal milieu in which such historical narratives were produced has severely restricted the number of accounts that provide us with detailed information about how such women prosecuted their lives. However, as with the Old Norse sagas, an examination of the literary sources from the societies of medieval Britain will aid our understanding of the conceptual framework around which these societies ordered their world. Indeed, the tendency of medieval authors to reflect and exaggerate expected behavioural codes reveals a great deal about the significance that these societies placed upon conceptions of gender, status and power.

Let us begin by examining the female characters which appear in the epic Old English poem *Beowulf*. *Beowulf* appears to have been composed during the eighth century and survives in the form we have it in a late tenth-century/early eleventh century manuscript.³⁵ Admittedly, it is a retrospective text; taking place in a mythical pre-Christian Scandinavian context which is distanced both chronologically and geographically from its Old English audience. Nevertheless, like the Old Norse literature it does provide us with an idealised insight into the 'conceptual universe' of the society in which it was formulated and highlights the expected

³⁵ *Beowulf*, pp. 1–3. See also A. Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 20.

roles, behavioural traits, values and taboos which clearly continued to resonate with audiences throughout the Anglo-Saxon era.³⁶

Three significant female characters appear within the poem and each of these exercise exaggerated traits and provide comparative models for both the most exemplary and the most abhorrent behavioural patterns associated with powerful women.³⁷ *Wealhþeow* provides the ideal exemplar, consistently behaving with wisdom, courtesy and conducting herself with appropriate social decorum. She fulfils the important domestic function of hostess as the cup bearer at her lord's hall, she speaks with temperance and provides sensible counsel when her opinion is asked. She acts as a peaceful intermediary between the Hrothgar and his retinue thereby facilitating and reinforcing the social bonds of the group.³⁸ Moreover, she is a loyal and faithful wife who has assumed the role of a peace-weaver between the Danes and the Helmings through her union with Hrothgar.³⁹ *Wealhþeow* is, therefore, the model queen for this patriarchal society; her modesty and fidelity temper her position of power. Indeed, her adherence to appropriate feminine norms prevents her from posing any threat to social order.⁴⁰

The poet's depiction of the character *Thryth* provides us with an alternative view of the way in which a powerful woman might have been expected to behave. *Thryth*, was a haughty and 'imperious' queen of the Geats who violently slew any man whom she caught gazing on her beauty.

³⁶ For a discussion concerning the value and validity of *Beowulf* for understanding conceptual ideas of gender and power in Old English society see A. Hennessey Olsen, "Gender Roles" in R.E. Bjork and J.D. Niles (eds.), *A Beowulf Handbook* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), pp. 311–324.

³⁷ J. Chance, "Grendel's Mother as Epic Anti-Type of the Virgin and Queen" in R.D. Fulk (ed.), *Interpretations of Beowulf: A Critical Anthology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 251–263, 254–261.

³⁸ *Beowulf*, lines 611–627 and 1159–1225, pp. 62–65, 88–93. Chance, "Grendel's Mother", pp. 254–255.

³⁹ *Beowulf*, lines 2016–2019, pp. 130–131, Chance, "Grendel's Mother", pp. 254–255.

⁴⁰ Her acquiescent role in relation to her male guardians may be emphasised through her name which is a conflation of two Old English words both of which carry the meaning of 'a slave'. *Wealh* denoted 'a foreigner' or 'an outsider' but could also be used to denote 'a slave' or 'a servant' in Old English. *Þeow* carried the meaning of 'a slave'. Damico offers an alternative interpretation as she feels that *Wealhþeow* has latent militaristic connotations that may be associated with the Old Norse Valkyrie. See H. Damico, *Beowulf's Wealhtheow and the Valkyrie Tradition* (Madison, Wisconsin/London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), pp. 58–86. For an alternative interpretation see chapter 2.

There was no brave man among the dear companions, save her overlord, who by day dared to venture a gaze at her with his eyes; but he might reckon deadly fetters, twisted by hand, assured for him; that after seizure the sword would be prescribed, the patterned blade should settle it, make known a violent death.⁴¹

Thryth's behaviour, however, changed dramatically following her betrothal and marriage to Offa and she subsequently "occupied the throne well, famous for virtue, while living made good use of the life destined for her, maintained a profound love for the chief of heroes."⁴²

Thryth's behaviour is, therefore, identical to that of the 'maiden queens' depicted in the Old Norse literature. She protected her chastity and, therefore, her power and autonomy in a violently aggressive manner until she accepted a husband. Following this marriage her warrior behaviour appears to have been tamed through her sexual submission and her masculine traits dissolve away as she assumes a more compliant normative feminine role. The poet clearly disapproved of Thryth's socially disruptive and warlike behaviour, yet his depiction would appear to acknowledge that powerful women were able to assert their independence through the adoption of specifically masculine behavioural traits. The poet emphasised Thryth's adoption of masculine qualities through her name which is used in Old English to denote physical strength.⁴³

Finally, in the character of Grendel's mother we are perhaps able to glimpse the poet's vision of the feminine anti-type. Despite her monstrous appearance Grendel's mother is consistently referred to using gendered social terminology.⁴⁴ For example, she is called an *ides aglæcwif* (lady monster-woman) and a *wif unhyre* (monstrous woman); terms such

⁴¹ "Nænig þæt dorste deor geneþan swæstra gesiða, nefne sinfrea, þæt hire an dæges eagum stæde; ac him wælbende weotode tealde, handgewriþene; hraþe seoþðan wæs æfter mundgripe mece gebinged, þæt hit sceadenmæl scyran moste, cwealmbealu cyððan." *Beowulf*, lines 1933–1940, pp. 126–127. This account of Thryth's behaviour is not dissimilar to the poet's description of the behaviour of Grendel's mother, see *Beowulf*, lines 1258–1261, 1294–1299, pp. 94–97.

⁴² "Ðer hio syððan well in gumstole, gode mære, lifgesceafta lifigende breac, hiold heahlufan wið hælþa brego", *Beowulf*, lines 1951–1954, pp. 126–127.

⁴³ See Chance, "Grendel's Mother", p. 261.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 251. Bitel argues that Grendel's mother was a "dark mirror-image of a mateless mother wrought by the literate—an anti-woman made up to horrify beer swilling Englishmen and women hiding in their halls. But she shared with other ordinary mothers—both in the poem and beyond the text—a simple determination to protect her offspring" therefore Bitel feels that "this famous childbearer serves as an instructive introduction to the common conditions of medieval women." L.M. Bitel, *Women in Early Medieval Europe*, pp. 155–156.

as *ides* and *wif* are more usually applied to human women.⁴⁵ Moreover, the term *ides* specifically relates to a woman of high status and is also employed by the poet to refer to the exemplary queen Wealhþeow and the less acceptable character of Thryth.⁴⁶ Yet, Grendel's mother is also described using masculine pronouns and epithets which are more usually applied to powerful male leaders, for example *mihtig manscaða* or 'destroyer'.⁴⁷ This semantic blurring of both sexual and social categories is also borne out by her actions.⁴⁸ Grendel's mother has no husband and so her son is her only male guardian. Therefore, when Beowulf slays Grendel she is placed in an untenable situation.⁴⁹ In human legal terms she has no right to compensation because her son was a murderer; yet Grendel was not only her son but he was also her lord. Beowulf's actions therefore place her in a situation in which she has no guardian to avenge her. She, therefore, adopts the masculine behaviour, more usually associated with a warrior retainer, and actively seeks to avenge her son/lord's death.⁵⁰ Grendel's mother takes her revenge, as would a great warrior, by entering the enemy's hall and slaying his favourite champion. The poet tells us that Hrothgar's retinue recognises her physically feminine form and, therefore, her vulnerability. Yet, despite this, they are all the more terrified by the feminine nature of this maternal avenger behaving in a manner more befitting of a male warrior.⁵¹

During her subsequent battle with the hero, Beowulf, we see the full extent to which Grendel's mother adopts a masculine 'persona' to express her vengeful power. As Beowulf entered the lake she "clutched at him, seized the warrior in a dreadful grip" and carried him to her

⁴⁵ *Beowulf*, lines 1259, 2120, 1351, pp. 94, 98, 134, Chance, "Grendel's Mother", p. 251.

⁴⁶ *Beowulf*, lines 620, 1168, 1649, and 1941, pp. 63, 90, 112 and 126. See also A.L. Meaney, "The *Ides* of the Cotton Gnomie Poem", *New Readings*, pp. 158–175 and Chance, "Grendel's Mother", p. 251.

⁴⁷ *Beowulf*, line 1339, p. 98. Other examples include *sinnigne secg* (warrior), line 1379, p. 100 or *gyreligne grundhyrde* (male guardian), line 2136, p. 136. In lines 1260 and 1497 the poet uses the masculine pronoun "*se þe*" instead of the feminine "*seo þe*", pp. 94, 104 and in lines 1392 and 1394 he uses the pronoun "*he*" instead of the feminine "*heo*", p. 100. See Chance, "Grendel's Mother", p. 251.

⁴⁸ Chance, "Grendel's Mother", p. 252.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.* Chance has argued, it is her adoption of masculine traits which makes her truly monstrous in the eyes of Hrothgar's men. It has already been noted that the male victim of any physical assault by a female would have been stigmatised and shamed by such an attack.

lair.⁵² Thus, in a powerful expression of her physical prowess Grendel's mother overpowers and abducts the hero. This act symbolically emasculates Beowulf, stigmatising him as a 'battle-taken' individual, an act which has even greater significance because his captor is female. The poet then emphasises Beowulf's emasculation by relating that when he attempted to strike his enemy with his trusty sword, Hrunting, the mighty blade, proved to be useless:

...the edge failed the prince in his need. It had endured many hand-to-hand encounters before...it was the first occasion for this precious treasure that its glory failed.⁵³

Following this Beowulf attempts to immediately reassert his prowess through a display of sheer physical strength, "so ought a man to do when he means to gain long-lasting praise in battle."⁵⁴ Beowulf is able to shrug off the stigma of fighting with a female because Grendel's mother had proved herself as worthy as any masculine opponent. "...the prince of the War-Geats seized Grendel's mother by the shoulder—he felt no remorse for the quarrel."⁵⁵

The physical struggle, which ensues, has significant sexual overtones. Beowulf throws Grendel's mother to the floor yet, she fights back with violent embraces (*grimman grapum*).⁵⁶ She then topples the hero, straddles him and attempts to penetrate his flesh with her dagger.⁵⁷ Beowulf only manages to save himself by grasping a huge magical sword lying close by and striking his enemy so that "the sword passed straight through the doomed body".⁵⁸ The sexual imagery is then completed when following the death of this 'monstrous lady' the magical sword which had defeated her "...melted away, just like the ice when the Father, he who has power over times and seasons, loosens the fetters of frost."⁵⁹

⁵² "*Grap þa togeanes gudrinc gefeng*", *Beowulf*, line 1501, p. 106. The noun *gefeng* means, literally, 'a taking', 'capture' or 'captivity', *ASD*, p. 390.

⁵³ "*ac seo ecg geswac deodne æt þearfe. Dolode ær fela hondgemota...ða wæs forma sið deorum madme, þæt his dom alegg*" *Beowulf*, lines 1524–1528, p. 106.

⁵⁴ "*Sæva sceal man don, þonne he æt gude gegan þenceð longsumne lof*", *ibid.*, lines 1534–1536, p. 106.

⁵⁵ "*Gefeng þa be eaxle—nalas for fenhde mearn- Guð-Geata leod Grendles modor*." *Ibid.*, lines 1537–1538, p. 106.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, line 1542, p. 108.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, lines 1543–1546, p. 108.

⁵⁸ "*þæt eal ðurhwod fægne flæschoman*." *Ibid.*, lines 1567–1568, p. 108.

⁵⁹ "*þæt hit eal gemealt ise gelicost, ðonne forstes bend Fieder onleated, onwinded wælrapas, se ge-weald hafað sæla ond mæla*", *ibid.*, lines 1608–1611, p. 110.

Through the characters of Thryth and Grendel's mother, then, the *Beowulf* poet acknowledges that, in certain circumstances, powerful women might act autonomously and aggressively provided that they adopted appropriate characteristics for that role. The poet, however, seems to abhor such behaviour and suggests that it has no place in Christian society. He appears to view these aggressive women in the same way as he views Grendel: as pagan anachronisms.⁶⁰ Moreover, the conflict between Beowulf and Grendel's mother is significant because it reveals a great deal about the poet's conceptions regarding expressions of power. It is portrayed not as a struggle between a man and a woman but rather as a struggle between two individuals for physical dominance. Beowulf's abduction is a necessary device used by the poet to place the hero on an equal footing with his adversary. Following his abduction Beowulf must reassert his manhood and prowess in order to regain his honour and his place within society. Grendel's mother, on the other hand, must prove her worth if she is to retain her autonomy and avenge her son. It is perhaps unsurprising that the poet chose to depict this conflict using the imagery of sexual domination and submission. As we have seen, sexual dominance was a commonplace idiom for expressing physical power in the medieval European context. The fact that, in this instance, one of the protagonists was actually a woman is unimportant as the struggle for sexual dominance merely provided a metaphor for the fundamentally significant struggle for power, characterised through symbols of warrior-hood and masculinity.⁶¹

In order to discover how such conceptions might have played out in reality let us return now to examine the life of Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians, in greater detail. Æthelflæd was Alfred the Great's first

⁶⁰ The poet clearly associated Grendel and his mother with the pagan past. They are both depicted as violent, savage and un-Christian, *ibid.*, lines 1258–1278, p. 94. The poet also comments on Thryth's masculine behaviour calling it a "terrible sin" (*"Mod Pryðo weg, fremu folces cwen, fíren ondrysne."*) He also states that it was not befitting for a queen and peaceweaver to take the life of her own warriors, *ibid.*, lines 1931–1932, 1940–1943, pp. 126–127. In addition, Damico notes that the Old English equivalents of the Old Norse valkyrie were consistently referred to as female creatures associated with malevolence and destruction, *Beowulf's Wealthrow*, p. 44.

⁶¹ "The ideologies of patriarchy and masculinism help define the matrix of this circumscribed world by attending to the relationship between patrilineal aristocratic family and the institutionalized aggression of the warrior class", C.A. Lees, "Men in Beowulf" in C.A. Lees (ed.), *Medieval Masculinities, Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 129–148, 146.

child and her mother, Ealhswith, was of Mercian royal stock.⁶² In 886 Alfred re-conquered the traditionally Mercian city of London from the Danes. He assigned leadership of this conquest to a loyal Mercian ealdorman named Æthelred who was already effectively in control of the Mercian territory. A few years later Alfred betrothed his first born child, Æthelflæd, to this Mercian ealdorman. Æthelflæd was, therefore, intended to be a peace weaver, her Mercian lineage reinforcing the bonds between Mercia and Wessex.⁶³ It is surprising therefore that she should later assume the role of a warrior queen which appears to be so at odds with the behavioural norms expected of a woman in her position. It may be significant that the Wessex chronicler chose to disregard the achievements of this offspring of the greatest king of Wessex. This would seem to suggest that Æthelflæd's haughty behaviour may have been regarded with some disapproval within her father's kingdom.⁶⁴ Fortunately, we do have some account of her exploits detailed in the Abingdon Manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and also, more unusually, from an Irish chronicler in the *Three Fragments*.⁶⁵

So how was this peace weaving princess transformed into the martial leader portrayed in the extracts from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* quoted at the beginning of this chapter? Æthelflæd appears to have assumed control of Mercia during the first decade of the tenth century at which time she was in her thirties and would have been considered a mature woman. The *Three Fragments* note that in 907 Æthelflæd granted certain lands near Chester to an expelled Hiberno-Norse leader and

⁶² Wainwright, "Æthelflæd", p. 45.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁶⁴ There may also have been political reasons for the silence of the Wessex chronicler with regard to Æthelflæd's career. Indeed, the chronicler may have wished to play down her strength and independence so as not to encourage future Mercian aspirations to break free from West Saxon hegemony, *ibid.*, p. 53.

⁶⁵ For *ASC* see notes 1 and 2, above. The *Three Fragments* are an annalistic compilation that appears in an early seventeenth-century manuscript compiled by Duaid MacFirbis. The origins of this text have been debated in detail by Wainwright who argues that the *Three Fragments* were probably based upon a lost 'Old Irish Chronicle' that also underlies the *Annals of Ulster* and the *Annals of Tigernach*. In spite of its legendary tone the *Three Fragments* does contain a great deal of detail concerning Æthelflæd's career that is corroborated by other contemporary sources. In addition, philological evidence suggests that part of the annal dates quite closely to the events that it describes. Wainwright therefore feels that the text constitutes a relatively reliable source concerning Æthelflæd's life and times. His opinion appears to receive some support from more recent Irish historians such as Ó Cróinín, see F.T. Wainwright, "Ingimund's invasion", *EHR*, 63, 1948, pp. 145–169, 150–159 and Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, p. 255.

his followers.⁶⁶ Later in the same year these annals relate that she established a large garrison in Chester.⁶⁷ The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* notes that in 910 Æthelflæd built a fortress at Bremsburh.⁶⁸ In all of these actions it appears that Æthelflæd acted autonomously and it would be easy to imagine that she had assumed the reins of power because she had become widow. Yet, this was not the case, as *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* tells us that “Æthelred, Lord of the Mercians” (“*Æþered Myrcna hlaforð*”) did not pass away until 911.⁶⁹ How was it possible, then, in such a patriarchal society, for a woman to attain such an ascendancy over her husband? The *Three Fragments* appear to provide us with a clear answer; in the later years of his life Æthelred was an extremely ill man. Indeed, the Irish annals relate that Ingemund and his Hiberno-Norse forces had approached Æthelflæd because “her husband was at that time in disease.”⁷⁰

Æthelred’s long-term incapacity may, therefore, explain a great deal about Æthelflæd’s actions and behaviour. During the period from 905–910 Æthelred was alive but unfit to rule. As he and Æthelflæd had no sons and only one daughter then the role of leadership of the Mercians fell squarely upon his wife’s shoulders. In order to fulfil this role Æthelflæd had to adopt certain normative masculine characteristics necessary for power holding. She assumed a martial persona appropriate for a war leader and this appears to be borne out by the sources.⁷¹ Significantly, following Æthelred’s death, Æthelflæd’s behaviour appears to have become even more warrior-like. During this time the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* begins to refer to Æthelflæd as *Myrcna hlæfdige* (Lady of the Mercians) the direct equivalent of Æthelred’s title of *Myrcna hlaforð* (Lord of the Mercians).⁷² The *Three Fragments* relate that in 918 she took an extremely active role in a battle in which the Vikings were routed. Indeed, the Irish annalist clearly felt that Æthelflæd was a military

⁶⁶ *The Annals of Ireland, Three Fragments*, J. O’Donovan (ed. and trans.) (Dublin: Archaeological and Celtic Society, 1860), p. 229.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 229. This is supported by *ASC MS C* which notes that Chester was rebuilt (presumably meaning refortified) in this year, “*Her wæs Ligeſter geedniwod.*”, Mercian Register 907, p. 75.

⁶⁸ “*Æðelflæd geſimbrede þa burh æt Bremsbyrig.*” *Ibid.*, MR 910, p. 75.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, MR 911, p. 75. See also *ASC MS A*, p. 64, and *ASC MS D*, p. 38.

⁷⁰ *TF*, p. 227. The twelfth-century chronicler, Henry of Huntingdon, also appears to have been aware that Æthelred had been an ill man for some time before his death, *HA*, pp. 305–307.

⁷¹ See notes 1, 2, 65 and 66, above.

⁷² *ASC MS C*, MA 911, 912, p. 75 and Wainwright, “Æthelflæd”, p. 46.

leader with royal authority. He states that during the aforesaid conflict Æthelflæd ordered her forces to pursue their enemy into a wood and to massacre them “In this manner did the Queen (*riogan*) kill all the pagans, so that her fame spread abroad in every direction.”⁷³ Furthermore, in an entry for 916 the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* relates that “Æthelflæd sent an army into Wales and broke down Brecon Mere, and there took the wife of the king as one of thirty-four.”⁷⁴ Evidently, Æthelflæd was as willing as any man to assert her place in the hierarchy of power by adopting that most symbolic of martial practices: female abduction.

The exceptional circumstances of her husband’s long illness forced Æthelflæd into assuming a powerful warrior role in the absence of a suitable male substitute. However, unlike the majority of eligible Anglo-Saxon widows Æthelflæd did not remarry following her husband’s death. The reason for this would appear to be that her assumption of the powerful role of leader of the Mercians would have made this difficult. If Æthelflæd had remarried she would have had to submit herself to a man and thereby surrender the power she had acquired during Æthelred’s illness. By doing so she would have also been symbolically placing her warriors in the unpleasant position of a vanquished force. In a sense, this is what happened when the Viking leader Cnut married Queen Emma following his conquest of England in 1017. Unsurprisingly, Emma’s panegyrist portrayed this marriage as a benign and magnanimous union between two equals.⁷⁵ Yet, by marrying Emma, Cnut was appropriating the wife of his vanquished enemy, a view that finds support in some of the more contemporary narratives. For example, William of Jumièges (writing some years later during the final quarter of the eleventh century) noted that Emma had been afforded little say regarding her union with Cnut. William relates that Cnut “...took Queen Emma from the city (London) and married her a few days later

⁷³ *TF*, p. 247. The *Annals of Ulster* also refer to Æthelflæd as the “...very famous queen of the Saxons” (“...famosissima regina Saxonum”), *AU*, pp. 368–369.

⁷⁴ “...ðæs embe preo niht sende Æþelfled fyrde on Wealas 7 abræc Breconanmere 7 þær genam ðæs cinges wif feower 7 ðritiga sume”, *ASC*, *MS C*, MR 916, pp. 75–76, translation from Swanton, *ASC*, p. 100.

⁷⁵ See *EER*, pp. 32–33. Pauline Stafford is happy to follow the panegyrist’s line on this issue arguing that “By the time the marriage occurred it thus signified not merely the domination over the conquered, but the friendship and peace between them” see *Queen Emma and Queen Edith* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 227.

according to the Christian rite. In return for her he handed over her weight in gold and silver to the army."⁷⁶

The behavioural traits adopted by women like Æthelflæd can therefore reveal a great deal about the way in which power was both defined and expressed in Anglo-Saxon England.⁷⁷ Power and strength were predominantly characterised and perceived through symbols of warrior prowess that were very much associated with masculinity. However, such expressions were clearly not the exclusive preserve of men and this, in turn, raises some interesting questions regarding the significance of loss of power and perceptions of weakness in this society. Before we address these issues, it will be necessary to examine whether we are able to identify any discernibly similar conceptions regarding gender and power within the literature and historical narratives of the other societies of medieval Britain.

Let us turn, to begin with, to the literature of medieval Wales. The Four Branches of the *Mabinigion* written down, most probably, during the late eleventh century provide several examples of powerful female characters who display masculine characteristics similar to those under discussion. In *Math, Son of Mathonwy* the character Anranrhod is depicted

⁷⁶ "Emmam reginam abstractam ab urbe post aliquot dies sibi iunxit Christiano more, dans pro illa cuncto exercitui in auro et argento pensum illius corporis.", *GND*, vol. ii, lib. ix, pp. 20–21. Some decades later William of Malmesbury complained that Duke Richard II of Normandy had married Emma to "...the enemy and the invader, and you would not know which incurred the greater disgrace, the man who gave her away or the woman who agreed to share the bed of one who harassed her husband and exiled her sons." ("De illorum in patriam restitutione Ricardum auunculum nichil egisse comperimus, quin et sororem suam Emmam hosti et inuasori nuptum collocauit: ignores maiore illius dedecore qui dederit, an feminae quae consenserit ut thalamo illius caleret qui uirum infestauerit, filios effugauerit."), *GRA*, vol. i, pp. 318–319. See also S. Keynes, "The Æthelings in Normandy", *ANS*, xiii, pp. 173–207, 183.

⁷⁷ During the eleventh century Ælfifu of Northampton and Queen Emma both expressed their power through similar strategies. In 1030 Cnut despatched his concubine Ælfifu of Northampton to Norway to rule along with their son Swein. According to an eleventh-century skaldic verse she approached this powerful position with a warrior-like ethos employing violence and tyranny, see *Agrip Noregskonunga Sogum*, B. Einarsson (ed.) (Rekjavík: Hið islenska fornritafélag, 1984), p. 31. Following Emma's submission to Cnut in 1017 she undoubtedly attempted to reassert her power through displays associated with warrior prowess. The detailed description of the Viking fleet extant in the *Encomium* reveals the Queen's interest in martial matters, pp. 18–21. Furthermore, Stafford has argued that Emma was protected by her own loyal retinue of warriors following Cnut's death. She has also suggested that during Cnut's reign, Emma, like Æthelflæd, might well have acted as her husband's regent during periods when he was absent from England, see *Queen Emma*, pp. 144, 188. See also E. Searle, "Emma the Conqueror" in C. Harper-Bill et al. (eds.), *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. Allen Brown* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1989), pp. 281–289.

as an autonomous and wealthy woman who resided within a stronghold named *Caer Anranrhod* or Anranrhod's fort.⁷⁸ She commanded subjects, held feasts, patronised bards, extended hospitality and bestowed arms in a manner befitting any Welsh lord.⁷⁹ The tale also relates in some detail her vehement opposition to her own son Llew Llaw Gyffes. Anranrhod repeatedly attempted to obstruct Llew Llaw Gyffes from completing his ritual lifecycle and cursed him on three separate occasions stating that he would never have a name, never bear arms and never take a wife.⁸⁰ Llew Llaw Gyffes overcame each of these curses by using magic and trickery with the help of the sorcerer, Gwydion. In order to fully understand Anranrhod's appropriation of masculine traits we must examine the reasons behind this maternal antipathy toward her son.

As already noted, Anranrhod conducted herself, very much, as a 'maiden queen'; expressing her power through distinctly warrior-like characteristics. However, following the rape of king Math's footholder, Goewin, Anranrhod was nominated by her brother, Gwydion, to take over Goewin's role at Math's court; a position that was clearly associated with both chastity and femininity. During a subsequent audience with Math, the king questioned whether Anranrhod was a virgin to which she replied "That is my belief."⁸¹ Math was, however, unconvinced and asked her to step over a magic wand in order to affirm her chastity. This she did and instantly gave birth to a fair-haired son who upon baptism headed straight for the sea. In addition to this child we are told that she also gave birth to "a small something".⁸² It seems probable that this "small something" was an undeveloped foetus as Gwydion, the sorcerer, wrapped it in a sheet and incubated it in a small chest at the foot of his bed. Indeed, the author alludes to the fact that Gwydion was the father of these children, both of whom appear to be the product of some form of incestuous union between the sorcerer and his warlike sister.⁸³ The "small something" which Gwydion cared for subsequently

⁷⁸ *Mab.*, p. 55 see Millersdaughter, "Geopolitics of Incest", p. 308. The naming of a fortress after a woman is virtually unknown in any other medieval Welsh text, personal communication, Dylan Foster-Evans, Department of Welsh, Cardiff University.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 56–58, Millersdaughter, "Geopolitics of Incest", p. 308.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 55, 57–58.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 54, "*Ny wnn i amgen no'm bot*", Welsh version from Ford, *Math uab Mathonvey*, p. 8.

⁸² *Mab.*, p. 54, "*Ac ar hynny adaw y ryw bethan ohonei*", Welsh version from Ford, *Math uab Mathonvey*, p. 9.

⁸³ Millersdaughter, "Geopolitics of Incest", pp. 302–304.

grew into the hero Lleu Llaw Gyffes.⁸⁴ As for Anranrhod, following her spontaneous birth labours she fled Math's court in dishonour. It is not clear how her pregnancy had been caused, whether through Gwydion's magic or through an actual act of physical intercourse. Yet, however it had occurred, Anranrhod's very public delivery revealed that she had submitted herself to a man; a shame that was all the more profound because that man was her brother.⁸⁵ Moreover, her apparent sexual submission clearly highlighted her femininity and, more importantly, her inability to act as guardian in defence of her virginity. This, in turn, threatened the autonomy and power that she had acquired and emphasised through warrior symbols and behaviour.⁸⁶ Anranrhod, therefore, attempted to deny her lost virginity by denying the existence of her own son. She did this in a very specific way: by deliberately obstructing Lleu Llaw Gyffes progression into warrior manhood. She therefore denied his right to be named, she denied his ritual passage into bearing arms and, ultimately, she denied that he would ever marry and have intercourse with a woman.⁸⁷ By denying her son's passage into manhood Anranrhod was attempting to deny his social existence.⁸⁸ For without these key symbols of masculinity Lleu Llaw Gyffes would be unable to attain power and without power he would remain, essentially,

⁸⁴ *Mab*, pp. 54–55.

⁸⁵ A contention argued convincingly by Millersdaughter, "Geopolitics of Incest", pp. 302–304. In addition, Gruffydd suggested that the extant version of this text is an amalgamation of two earlier texts that have since been lost. He argues that in one of these lost texts Anranrhod would have been incestuously raped by Gwydion's brother, Gilfaethwy and this resulted in her shame over the birth of Lleu Llaw Gyffes, see W.J. Gruffydd, *Math fab Mathonwy* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press Board, 1928), pp. 197, 226. Bollard, on the other hand, has argued that Anranrhod's shame arose from her status as an unmarried mother, see J.K. Bollard, "The Structure of the Four Branches of the Mabinogi", *THSC*, 1975, pp. 250–276. Whichever interpretation one accepts it is clear that the author/redactor of the *Mabinogion* clearly associated Anranrhod's shame with her perceived loss of chastity and/or incestuous sexual relationship with her brother. Moreover, French has noted that by "leaving Anranrhod's position in doubt it appears that the author wishes to present her as an unrepentant taboo breaker", which is, therefore, in accord with her assumption of a masculine persona. C.A. French, "Masculinity and Femininity in the 'Mabinogion'", Unpublished Thesis, Deakin University, 1990, p. 183.

⁸⁶ This is emphasised by a statement made by the sorcerer, Gwydion, who taunts Anranrhod by saying "...it is because of him (Lleu Llaw Gyffes) you are angry, since you are no longer called a virgin. Never again will you be called a virgin", *Mab*., p. 55. "*A thitheu...yr hwnn yd wyt ti, ac awar arnat am na'th elwir y uoreyn, ni ni'th elwir bellach byth yn uoreyn*", Welsh version from Ford, *Math uab Mathonwy*, p. 10.

⁸⁷ *Mab*., pp. 55–58.

⁸⁸ French, "Masculinity", p. 183.

a non-being.⁸⁹ Anranrhod's actions therefore reveal that in order to define and preserve one's own power and social identity it was very often necessary to deny another's.⁹⁰

This literary example suggests that medieval Welsh society constructed concepts of power and gender in a similar way to the Germanic societies of Iceland, Scandinavia and Anglo-Saxon England.⁹¹ The medieval Welsh literature, generally, depicts a society in which power operated on a continuum based upon winnable and loseable characteristics that were founded very much upon a masculine warrior template. However, when we turn to the historical narratives and annals it becomes more difficult to identify powerful Welsh women who adopted masculine characteristics in the way that Æthelflæd or Ælfgifu did within Anglo-Saxon society. This may be because the fragmented and violent nature of the Welsh politics made it extremely difficult for even the most determined female to attain this level of autonomy. Yet, it is equally likely that such women did exist but that the intensely patriarchal Welsh literati chose not to record their careers.⁹² However, we do have one scrap of evidence which suggests that a medieval Welsh noblewoman might be able to assume masculine attributes and adopt a warrior persona. This evidence comes from the twelfth-century ethnological observer, Gerald of Wales. In his text *Itinerarium Kambriæ* (*The Journey through Wales*) Gerald tells us that in 1136 a Welsh princess named Gwenllïan led her men into battle near Kidwelly against English forces headed by Maurice of London. He relates:

It was in this region, after the death of Henry I, King of the English, and at a moment when her husband, Gruffudd ap Rhys, Prince of South

⁸⁹ "The boy is theirs, the shame hers, and she would have that shame unnamed and unarmed, banished from the sociality of identity, property and power." Millersdaughter, "Geopolitics of Incest", p. 307.

⁹⁰ It should be noted that Anranrhod gave birth to two sons. The first, Dylan Eil Ton, immediately headed for the sea and disappeared. This may well be a motif signifying the exposure of an incestuously begotten child. The key point, however, is that Dylan did not remain within society and, therefore, he did not remain to constantly remind Anranrhod of her shame.

⁹¹ Indeed, in another of the four branches of the *Mabinogion* it is possible to identify two characters that appear to be very similar in nature to Grendel and his mother. In *Branwen Uerch Llŷr* we are told that whilst hunting in the wilds by a lakeside the Irish king, Matholwch, encountered two huge individuals. One was a man with the evil look of a brigand and the second was a monstrous woman, twice the size of the man *Mab.*, p. 26.

⁹² We have already seen that the Wessex chronicler failed to comment upon Æthelflæd's achievements.

Wales, had gone to North Wales for reinforcements, that the Princess Gwenllïan rode forward at the head of an army, like some second Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazons. She was beaten in battle by Maurice of London, who ruled over the district at that time and by Geoffrey, the Bishop's constable. She was so sure of victory that she had brought her two sons with her. One of them called Morgan was killed, and the other, called Maelgwyn, was captured. Gwenllïan herself had her head cut off, and so did many of her followers.⁹³

It is interesting to note that Gwenllïan was the wife of the Welsh prince Gruffudd ap Rhys. Gruffudd was a figure intimately associated with the traditional activities of the warrior fraternity and had been opposed to the encroaching cultural influence of the English settlers.⁹⁴ Gwenllïan was also the daughter of the Welsh king, Gruffudd ap Cynan, who as we have seen was heavily involved in traditional slaving activities throughout his career.⁹⁵ Gwenllïan's martial role was prompted by the absence of her husband and although Gerald's account tells us that her sons were present at the conflict his tone suggests that they must have been relatively young and inexperienced. Therefore, in the absence of a male guardian and in the face of immediate danger to her people Gwenllïan appears to have adopted normative masculine attributes in a similar manner to Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians. Her adoption of this role is emphasised by the warlike, yet, rather un-chivalrous manner of her death.

Attempting to establish whether similar conceptions existed in medieval Scottish society is somewhat more difficult. The dearth of historical sources from the region makes the identification of martial female figures similar to Æthelflæd and Gwenllïan virtually impossible. The absence

⁹³ "In partibus istis, Anglorum rege Henrico primo rebus humanis exempto, dum Grifpinus Resi filius, Sudwallie tunc princeps, in Norwalliam auxilium corrogaturus ivisset, uxor ejus Guendoloena, tanquam Amazonum regina et Penthesilea secunda, in partes illas exercitum ducens, a Mauricio Londoniensi, loci illius tunc domino, et viro egregio Gaufrido, præsulis constabulario, bellico in certamine confecta, interempto ibidem filio ejusdem Morgano, et altero capto, scilicet Mailgone, quos pueros secum in expeditionem arroganter adduxerat, cum aliis multis ipsa demum ferro confossa caput amisit", *Giraldi Cambrensis, Itinerarium Kambriæ et Descriptio Kambriæ*, J.F. Dimock (ed.) (London: Longman, 1868, reprint Kraus 1964), lib. i, chapter ix, pp. 78–79. Translation from Thorpe, *JDW*, p. 137.

⁹⁴ See chapter 2 and chapter 5. For an analysis of England's increasing political and cultural domination of Welsh society see R.R. Davies, *Domination and Conquest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 1–25 and *The First English Empire, Power Identities in the British Isles 1093–1343* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 5–11, 112–141.

⁹⁵ See chapter 2 and also Wyatt, "Gruffudd", pp. 608–609.

of any surviving literary tradition further compounds these difficulties. However, given the strong cultural influence that must have been exerted by the neighbouring Irish, Anglo-Saxon and Norse communities then the existence of similar power/gender conceptualisations seem far from unlikely. Scotland's strong political, cultural and linguistic affinities with Ireland provide us with a fruitful avenue for speculation. Despite the absence of medieval Scottish literary texts we do have several tales from Ireland that are located in the region. A closer examination of these tales may help to shed some light on the way power was conceived within the Scottish communities during this period.⁹⁶

The Irish tale *Tochmarc Emire* (The Wooing of Emer) tells of how Cú Chulainn, the great hero of Ulster, travelled the short distance across the Irish Sea to receive his military training in Scotland.⁹⁷ Interestingly, his prospective trainer was not a king or a nobleman but rather a queen named Scáthach. Scáthach resided in a *dun* or fort and although she had two sons and a daughter she appears to have been completely autonomous as no husband is ever mentioned. Scáthach actively trained her two sons, Cuair and Cet, in the art of war and agreed to do the same for Cú Chulainn after he threatened and overcame her by setting his sword between her breasts.⁹⁸ Scáthach had a mortal enemy, another martial queen named Aífe, who was said to be "the hardest woman-warrior in the world."⁹⁹ Cú Chulainn subsequently went to fight with Aífe and during the struggle she broke his sword so that "it was no longer than its hilt."¹⁰⁰ The hero then distracted the warrior queen through trickery and following this he abducted her, threw her to the ground and raped her.¹⁰¹ Aífe was impregnated during this union and she prophesised that she would give birth to a son. Following this Cú

⁹⁶ The use of this external evidence is further validated by the similarities between the belief systems and social structures of these two regions that is emphasised by the shared body of folklore that is extant in later medieval literature. See Chapter 2 above and Nagy, *Wisdom*, p. 1.

⁹⁷ *TE*, pp. 443–457, this text probably dates from the eleventh century, see chapter 2. See also N. Chadwick, "Pictish and Gaelic Marriage", *SGS*, 8, 1958, pp. 56–115, 77, note 7.

⁹⁸ *TE*, p. 449.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 451.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 451.

¹⁰¹ "At that Cuchulind approached her, seized her under her breast, threw her across (his shoulder) like a burden, and went to his own host... to throw her on the ground. "Life for life" she said, "My three wishes to me" said he, "Thou shalt have them." "These are my three wishes; thou to give hostages to Scathach without ever again opposing her, to be with me this night before thy own dun, and to bear me a

Chulainn departed from her fort never to return, leaving only a name for his unborn child.¹⁰²

There are several very familiar themes running through this tale. The autonomous queen who follows a warrior lifestyle is evident in both the characters of Scàtnach and Aiffe. Moreover, Cú Chulainn's conflict with Aiffe is extremely reminiscent of Beowulf's conflict with Grendel's mother. Aiffe got the better of Cú Chulainn by rendering his weapon obsolete. She, thereby, emasculated the hero just as Grendel's mother abducted and emasculated Beowulf. Cú Chulainn therefore reasserted his warrior prowess by dishonouring and disempowering Aiffe. In order to bring her under his subjection he employed that ultimate expression of masculine physical domination and violated her sexually. Following this act he departed but left his unborn offspring a name so that he would eventually be able to progress through the ritual stages and attain adult status as a warrior. The *Wooing of Emer* therefore reveals a very similar conceptual framework to those which we have seen in the literary sources of Anglo-Saxon England, Wales and Scandinavia. At the very least, it reveals that the medieval Irish author perceived Scotland as a region in which powerful martial women were not an unknown phenomenon.¹⁰³

Unfortunately, there are very few shreds of historical evidence to support the existence of powerful martial females in Scotland during the medieval period. Bede certainly related that it was well known in his day for the Picts to elect their kings "from the female royal line

son", *ibid.*, p. 451. The defeat of Aiffe and her army was, thereby, emphasised through forced sexual submission in plain view of her own men.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 451.

¹⁰³ This general perception appears to be confirmed by another external source from early thirteenth century Denmark. Saxo Grammaticus was a Danish cleric who wrote his semi-mythical *History of the Danes* during the first decade of the thirteenth century. Saxo relates, in some detail, a tale concerning a powerful Scottish queen. He tells us that this queen was unmarried and "...indeed could be counted a king if the barrier of sex were disregarded; more to the point, whatever man she honoured with her bed was actually king, and received a realm and her caresses together." (*Quippe reginam se esse, et, nisi refragaretur sexus, regem existimari posse; immo, quod uerius est, quemcunque thoro suo dignata fuerit, regem existere, regnumque se cum amplexibus dare.*) Like Thryth in *Beowulf*, this Scottish queen retained her power and autonomy by violently despatching any man who dared to woo her. It is made clear that whoever managed to consummate a marriage with this queen would then subdue and tame her through sexual dominance and thereby appropriate her kingdom. Although Saxo's work is geographically and chronologically distant from the society of early medieval Scotland his *History* may be indicative of wider Northern European perceptions concerning powerful women in Scottish society. Saxo Grammaticus, *The History of the Danes, Books I-X*, p. 99.

rather than the male.”¹⁰⁴ Chadwick has argued that a similar system of succession was also adopted by certain Scottish communities. Employing the evidence available from literary and genealogical tracts she has suggested that matrilineal succession continued until a comparatively late period in parts of Scotland and was not confined to the kingship, but extended also to local leaders.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, if matrilineal systems of succession did prevail in some Scottish communities then this may explain the external literary traditions concerning powerful and aggressive Scottish queens. An account in John of Fordun’s *Chronicle of the Scottish Nation* suggests that any changes to such succession customs would have been vehemently resisted.¹⁰⁶ John relates that when the Scottish king Kenneth II (971–995) attempted to introduce the rule of primogeniture he was faced with a great deal of opposition from traditional factions and that many enemies plotted to remove him.¹⁰⁷ These enemies eventually succeeded in finding an assassin and Kenneth was subsequently slain by a deadly contraption containing crossbows. Significantly, his murderer was not a man, but, a noblewoman, named Finella, who wished also to avenge her son who had been slain by Kenneth.¹⁰⁸ It is difficult to draw any far reaching conclusions concerning the constructions of power/gender in medieval Scottish society from such external literary sources and meagre historical references. However, when faced with the absence of a medieval Scottish literary and historical tradition they do, at least, provide us with a few threads of evidence allowing us to

¹⁰⁴ “*Magis de feminea prosapia quam de masculina regem sibi eligerent; quod usque hodie apud Pictos constat esse servatum*”, *EHEP*, pp. 18–19. An Irish hagiographical source *The Martyrology of Oengus* provides one account of a powerful Scottish female ruler. It relates the events surrounding the seventh-century martyrdom of Saint Donnan on the Scottish Island of Eigg and states that in around 618 Donnan took up residence in Galloway in a region “...where the queen of the country’s sheep used to be”. When this queen learned that Donnan and his companions had occupied her grazing land she ordered her warriors to “Let them all be killed”...so men came to them to slay them.” *Féilire Óengusso Céili Dé, The Martyrology of Oengus the Culdee*, W. Stokes (ed. and trans.) (London: Harrison and sons, 1905), p. 117, this Old Irish calendar of saints is thought to have been composed at the turn of the ninth century, see *ESSH*, vol. i, p. lxxxii, see *ibid.*, pp. 142–144, for other sources recording St. Donnan’s martyrdom at the hands of a local noblewomen.

¹⁰⁵ Chadwick, “Pictish and Celtic Marriage”, p. 71.

¹⁰⁶ *CSN*, vol. i, pp. 164–167, for discussion of this source see chapter 2. This account also appears in Bower’s *Scotichron.*, vol. ii, pp. 375–377.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* These enemies are said to have included Constantine son of the *fian*-style ruler king Culen discussed in chapter 2.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 165–167, see also *Scotichron.*, pp. 377–379.

speculate that very similar conceptualisations might have existed in the society of medieval Scotland.

As we have seen the Irish author of the *Tochmarc Emire* portrayed powerful women with martial characteristics existing in Scottish society. The chroniclers of the *Three Fragments* and the *Annals of Ulster* seem to have been perfectly willing to accept that Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians, was able to command her troops and her territory with autonomy.¹⁰⁹ The ninth-century Irish law tract *Cáin Adomnáin* suggests that in the pre-Christian period it had been possible for any woman to assume the role of a warrior.¹¹⁰ It is therefore unsurprising that tales regarding martial females are relatively common in the medieval Irish literary corpus. Perhaps, the most famous of these characters is Medb the violent and cunning warrior queen from the *Táin Bó Cualnge*.¹¹¹ The *Táin* relates that, although, Medb was married she was extremely jealous of her husband Ailill who claimed to have greater wealth and status than she.¹¹² Medb therefore attempted to assert her hegemony over Ailill by stealing a great bull from the men of Ulster. Cattle raiding was predominantly a masculine affair and Medb adopted the traits of a warrior in order to pursue her goal. She carried weapons, led her own troops, attempted to slay unreliable allies and offered the sexual favours of her daughter to mercenary soldiers.¹¹³ Furthermore, it is clear that Medb's competition with her husband was really about power. By adopting overtly masculine traits and acting in a war-like manner Medb was attempting to usurp her husband's power and status for herself. Her behaviour might have been understandable if Ailill had broken some significant behavioural taboo, yet this does not, at first, appear to have been the case. So how are we able to explain Medb's aggressive behaviour and why does she wish to disempower her own husband in this manner? The answer appears to lie in *Cath Bóinde* another Irish tale which prefigures the events related in the *Táin*.¹¹⁴

Cath Bóinde tells of Medb's various relationships with men before she was wed to Ailill. The story relates how Medb's first union was with

¹⁰⁹ See above.

¹¹⁰ *Cáin Adomnáin: an Old-Irish Treatise on the Law of Adamnan*, K. Meyer (ed. and trans.), *Anecdota Oxoniensia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), pp. 2–3.

¹¹¹ *TBC*, p. ix.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 138–139.

¹¹³ For examples see *ibid.*, pp. 137, 146–147, 190.

¹¹⁴ *Cath Bóinde*, J. O'Neill (ed. and trans.), *Eriu*, vol. ii, 1905, pp. 175–185. This is a tenth-century text which acts as a prologue to the *TBC*, see also *Bitel Land*, p. 70.

Conchobar mac Nesa, king of Ulster, to whom she was given, along with her sisters, in compensation for the killing of Conchobar's father. Medb appears to have despised the feminine role of a peace-weaver and she soon left Conchobar to pursue an affair with the warrior Tinde mac Conrach. Medb's father subsequently made her queen of Connacht bestowing upon her the right to confer kingship on her chosen partner. However, following this Medb was captured and raped by her estranged husband, Conchobar, in repayment for her infidelity. Tinde was subsequently slain whilst trying to avenge her rape and Medb remarried again but soon abandoned this husband for her foster-son, Ailill. She subsequently bore Ailill seven sons one of whom she hoped would avenge her by murdering Conchobar.¹¹⁵

Cath Bóinde, therefore, provides us with the context for Medb's war-like behaviour in the *Táin Bó Cualnge*. In her first union with Conchobar, king of Ulster, Medb was employed as a peace-weaver; a gift bride bestowed without consultation or assent as compensation for a homicide. She resisted this distinctly feminine role by rejecting her husband Conchobar and choosing a new male guardian in the shape of the warrior Tinde mac Conrach. Following this, her father recognised her thirst for power and made her queen giving her the right to confer kingship upon that guardian. Yet, her infidelity had constituted a serious injury against Conchobar and he subsequently raped Medb in order to reassert his honour and dominance over both her and her kindred. However, by the time this violation occurred Medb's social status had been dramatically elevated. She had become a powerful queen who was able to confer kingship on her suitors. Consequently, Conchobar's violation of Medb had significant implications. Indeed, this rape could no longer be perceived as the acceptable actions of an incensed husband punishing his adulterous wife. Rather, it became a symbolic political statement of Ulster's hegemony over Connacht. Tinde mac Conrach was subsequently slain whilst attempting to redress this outrage and Medb was, therefore, forced to find another champion who might avenge the dishonour done to her and her territory. She ultimately failed in this quest because both her husband, Ailill, and her sons by him refused to pursue the feud. The inactivity of her male guardians in this respect forced Medb to take matters into her own hands as is revealed by her actions in the *Táin Bó Cualnge*. Medb had conferred

¹¹⁵ *CB*, pp. 175–185.

kingship upon Ailill, so she first attempted to assert her superior position over her husband through haughty and war-like behaviour.¹¹⁶ She then lead the forces of Connacht against the Ulstermen in order to avenge herself and her territory by defeating Conchobar and regaining the power and honour that he had taken from her.

In another Ulster tale, *The Conception of Conchobar*, we are told a similar story concerning Conchobar's parents, Cathbad and Assa.¹¹⁷ Cathbad was a great druid and also the member of a violent *fian* band. On one occasion Cathbad's band joined forces with another *fian* group and attacked a dwelling massacring all of its inhabitants. The people slain in this incident were the foster family of the daughter of Eochaid Salbuide, the king of Ulster. This daughter, named Assa, requested that her father should avenge their deaths but he replied that he would be unable to do this as the culprits could not be identified. His failure to act, therefore, prompted Assa into action; she changed her name and adopted normative masculine attributes and dress becoming a *fian* warrior.¹¹⁸ She did this in order that she could search the wilderness for perpetrators of the atrocity and avenge her foster-kin. Cathbad, the chief instigator of the massacre, subsequently stumbled upon this female avenger by chance. This encounter is described in some detail. The author relates that Assa had gone into a spring to bathe

...and left her weapon and her dress on the land. Now Cathbad came on a quest to the same wilderness, and he reached the spring where the maiden was bathing. Cathbad then went between the maiden and her dress and her weapon, and he bared his sword over the head of the maiden.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ At the beginning of the *Táin Medb* attempted to emphasise her superior position by telling her husband that he had "...no claim for compensation or honour-price for it except what claim I have...for you are a man dependent on a woman's marriage-portion." *TBC*, p. 138.

¹¹⁷ *The Conception of Conchobar*, K. Meyer (ed. and trans.), *RC*, 6, 1883–1885, pp. 173–186. This tale is extant in a fourteenth-century manuscript, but almost certainly dates from the early medieval period.

¹¹⁸ "The father said it was not possible to avenge her, as it was not known who wrought the slaughter. Now the maiden was angry and wroth at this. She then went on a Fenian expedition with three times nine men to avenge her tutors. She destroyed and plundered every single district." *Ibid.*, p. 179. The Irish princess, Creidne, was said to have followed a similar course of action following her incestuous rape at the hands of her father; see Nagy, *Wisdom*, p. 49.

¹¹⁹ *CC*, p. 179.

It is clearly significant that Cathbad happened upon Assa whilst she was out of her masculine attire and bathing in the spring. This enabled him to symbolically position himself between Assa and the accoutrements of her warrior persona. By baring his sword above her head he further emphasised his own aggressive power and dominance rendering her battle-taken. The author clearly implies that Cathbad subsequently raped Assa, yet, despite this violent act he soon travelled to Ulster and received a blessing and territory from the girl's father.¹²⁰ Cathbad was, therefore, rewarded, rather than punished, because he had succeeded in halting Assa's dangerous gender swapping behaviour through his physical domination. Furthermore, his own violent warrior behaviour was, to some extent, tamed through the social acceptance and marriage he achieved as a result of this act.

These Irish tales reveal, by now, familiar themes concerning how the attainment and loss of power was expressed through gender characteristics, sexual dominance and submission. They suggest that physical power founded upon a template of normative masculine attributes defined a person's position within medieval Irish society, just as it appears to have done in the other communities of medieval Britain. Bitel agrees that expressions of masculinity were inextricably interwoven with power in Irish society.¹²¹ However, she suggests that "the vocabulary of political power and the vocabulary of violence were female... An assortment of overlapping feminised symbols expressed the literati's ideas about politics, sex and death."¹²² She contends, then, that the literati cast power in a feminine guise, indeed, only "the noblest, strongest, and manliest men fell to the curse of a female, albeit a supernatural, symbolic, textual female."¹²³ She also suggests that the lack of tangible historical evidence for the existence of such martial women in Ireland reveals that these textual characters "were cross-dressing symbols of sex and politics, not historical representations of real fighting women."¹²⁴ Such women, she feels, are representative only in the purely fictional pagan context of the distant past, whereas

Now, in the Christianising present, laws and Christian mores bound both men and women to proper social roles with more limited opportunities

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 179.

¹²¹ Bitel, *Land*, p. 215.

¹²² Ibid., p. 209.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 210.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 212.

for violence, chaos and sex... In the *orderly* present, men who took women were dangerous to the peace... A real man had no need to subdue a *ban-láech* (warrior female) with rape, which, although not uncommon, was no longer an honourable means of seizing what he wanted.¹²⁵

Yet, the majority of the Irish evidence appears to suggest that, as in all of the societies under discussion, violence, power and power-holding were very much imagined and expressed through symbols of masculinity rather than femininity. Indeed, it seems to have been an imperative for power hungry women such as Medb to adopt normative masculine attributes thus revealing that notions of power were framed, very much, in relation to ideals of manhood and warrior prowess. Nonetheless, the fictional conflicts between warrior males and martial females emphasised that it was possible for a man to lose his social status and be subjugated by any individual who displayed superior prowess irrespective of their biological gender. Of course, this symbolic loss of status was rendered even more disastrous if one's opponent was of a condition more usually associated with physical weakness and servility. The disgrace of being struck or overcome by either a woman or a slave would have been viewed with equal horror. In certain instances, overcoming such an unorthodox opponent appears to have doubly reaffirmed one's power and prowess, at least within a literary context. We have seen this, time and again, manifested in the conflicts between Beowulf and Grendel's mother, Cú Chulainn and Aífe, Lleu Llaw Gyffes and Anranrhod and Medb and Conchobar. Moreover, this reassertion of power and, indeed, manliness was frequently achieved through the physical act of rape. Bitel makes this point explicitly "every one of these militant, manly women was threatened with forcible rape or actually raped... marriage and sex with them secured rule for men."¹²⁶ She therefore highlights how sexual domination and violation were employed as metaphors for power and submission.

As we have seen, Bitel contends that the absence of historical evidence makes it difficult to support the existence of such powerful Irish women in reality. Nevertheless, such martial females did clearly exist in other societies in the British Isles.¹²⁷ If Æthelflæd, lady of the Mercians and

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 216 (my italics).

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 215.

¹²⁷ Similarly, Peter Foote and David Wilson have argued that the shield maidens extant in the Old Norse literature "...must certainly have some basis in reality." P. Foote and D. Wilson, *The Viking Achievement* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson/New York:

princess Gwenllïan could achieve power and autonomy is it so inconceivable that similar women could have existed in Ireland during the period in question? The Old Irish law tract *Brethu Crólige*, acknowledges that such women might exist. This tract, probably dating from the eighth century, lists several categories of powerful women who had their sick-maintenance commuted to a fixed fee in the event of an illegal injury being done to them.¹²⁸ These included “the woman who turns back the streams of war”, “the (female) ruler entitled to hostages” and the “woman revered by the territory”.¹²⁹ Furthermore, Edel has highlighted that a number of warlike women are identifiable in the later medieval and early modern periods in Ireland. These include Dearbhorgaill, daughter of Magnus Ó Conchobhair, who aided her husband Aedh Ó Domhnaill when he attempted to extend his territory southwards into Connacht in the early fourteenth century. The *Annals of Connacht* relate of her exploits in 1315 in the following manner:

Aed O Domnaill, King of Tir Conaill, came into Carbury and ravaged the whole district, being advised thereto by his wife, the daughter of Magnus O Conchobair. She herself, with all the gallowglasses and men of the Clan Murtagh that she could obtain, marched against the churches of Drumcliff and plundered many of its clergy.¹³⁰

Generally, the conservative and intensely patriarchal *literati* probably chose to overlook the deeds of such exceptional women. Indeed, the Wessex chronicler had very little to say about the career of Æthelflæd; no native Welsh source records Gwenllïan’s exploits on the battlefield,

St. Martin’s Press, 1970) pp. 110–111. This view has more recently been supported by Carol Clover see “Regardless”, p. 367.

¹²⁸ *Brethu Crólige* appears in a fifteenth century MS but appears to date originally from the eighth century and probably formed a part of the wider collection of customary law known as *Senchas Már*. The entries in question occur under the law relating to illegal injury and the provision of subsequent sick maintenance by the perpetrator of that injury. Kelly suggests that these entries may refer to a female military leader or possibly an abbess. See *Bretha Crólige*, D. Binchy (ed. and trans.), *Eriu*, 12, 1938, pp. 1–77. Kelly, *Guide*, pp. 69, 131–132.

¹²⁹ “*ben sues srutha cotha for cula*” “*rechtaid géill*” “*airmitnech tuaite*”, *Bretha Crólige*, p. 27. Kelly, *Guide*, pp. 69, 131–132. See also Edel, “Early Irish queens”, p. 2.

¹³⁰ “*Aed h. Domnaill ri Thiri Conaill do techt hi Carpre 7 crich Cairpri uili do milled leis tria comarli a mna .i. ingine Magnusa h. Conchobair, 7 dol di fein mar oen re a bfuair do gallocclaechaib 7 do Clainn Murcertaig fo templaib Droma Cliab 7 moran do clerchib Droma Cliab do arcain le.*” The entry for the following year relates how Dearbhorgaill hired mercenaries to kill Ruaidrí son of Domnall Ó Conchobair. See *Annála Connacht*, *The Annals of Connacht*, A. Martin Freeman (ed. and trans.) (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1944), pp. 240–243 and see Edel, “Early Irish queens”, for further examples pp. 1–19.

despite the fact that her story seems to have been widely known and talked about during the time of Gerald of Wales. Even if Bitel is correct and exceptional and powerful women did not adopt autonomous martial roles in early medieval Irish society then the texts of the saga material still reveal a conceptual world in which such behaviour could have been possible.

It is certainly true that the Christian *literati* who wrote down the sagas wished to portray Irish society as peaceful and stable, just as they wished to portray unacceptable behavioural norms as part of the pagan past. However, like the Christian author of *Beowulf*, the Irish *literati* adopted and adapted secular oral tales to highlight flaws within their own society and to elucidate certain moral ideals. This is perhaps best illustrated when we examine the issue of rape. Bitel argues that in Christian Ireland there was no longer any need for a “real man” to subdue women with rape because this “was no longer an honourable means of seizing what he wanted.”¹³¹ Yet, the fact that the rape and abduction of elite women such as nuns and abbesses remained prevalent in Ireland does, indeed, suggest that such acts continued to confer honour and constituted powerfully symbolic socio-political acts.¹³² In order to illustrate this point in more detail let us examine a specific example from the twelfth century. Following his accession to the throne of Leinster in 1132, Diarmait mac Murchada (king of Leinster 1132–66, 1170–71) abducted Mór, the Abbess of Cell Dara, and had her sexually violated in order to make her unfit to rule.¹³³ Following this he replaced the abbess with one of his own kinswomen. It is not clear whether Diarmait raped Mór himself; the *Annals of Loch Cé* are particularly vague on this point stating only that “...the nun herself was carried off a prisoner, and put into a man’s bed.”¹³⁴ Bitel compares Diarmait’s action to “burning down a church” yet it had a much more

¹³¹ Bitel, *Land*, p. 216. Yet, in this instance Bitel may be following the behavioural ideals of the *literati* a little too closely, indeed, she is later forced to qualify this by noting “the assault of women was common the length of Ireland, from Tory Island down to Cork.” *Ibid.*, p. 222.

¹³² As Bitel argues at a separate juncture “just as rape was politics, so politics could be a contest of virility”, Bitel, *Land*, p. 215. See also chapter 2 for the symbolic/political power of rape.

¹³³ F.J. Byrne, “The Trembling Sod: Ireland in 1169” in Cosgrove, *A New History of Ireland*, vol. ii, p. 22.

¹³⁴ *The Annals of Loch Cé*, W.M. Hennessy (ed. and trans.) (London: Longman, 1871), s.a. 1132, p. 131.

powerful significance than that.¹³⁵ Whether or not Diarmait carried out this action in person its symbolic implications are clear. This was a statement of political hegemony directly analogous to Conchobar's rape of Medb in *Cath Bóinde*. Cell Dara was effectively the capital of the kingdom of Leinster and control over its ecclesiastical institutions was an essential pre-requisite to any claim of governance over the region.¹³⁶ Many of Cell Dair's abbesses had had royal connections and were undoubtedly powerful women in their own right.¹³⁷ Fell has illustrated that abbesses in Anglo-Saxon society controlled both territory and men and were regarded in a similar manner to a *hlaford* or lord.¹³⁸ It seems clear from Diarmait's actions that the chastity of the abbess is what secured her autonomy and her fitness to command.¹³⁹ The rape of Mór was not just a deliberate pollution of her spiritual worthiness or an outrage intended to emasculate her male guardians. It was also a direct usurpation of her honour and power and essentially an act intended to subject one lord to another.

Powerlessness, Shame and Gender

Thus far we have seen that biological sex was far from decisive in establishing the behavioural parameters of women in the societies of medieval Britain.¹⁴⁰ The social position of strong women does not appear to have been limited provided that those women behaved in the manner befitting of an individual who wielded power. The truly definitive measure of an individual's power and social status, then, was based upon their ability to exert power over other individuals through

¹³⁵ Bitel, *Land*, p. 224.

¹³⁶ Byrne, "Trembling Sod", p. 22.

¹³⁷ Stafford, "Powerful Women", pp. 398–415.

¹³⁸ C. Fell, "Some Implications of the Boniface Correspondence" in Damico, *New Readings*, pp. 29–43, p. 33. The Irish author of the eighth-century hagiographical tract *Vita Prima Sanctae Brigide* certainly presented this archetypal female saint as an autonomous leader who had power over men, for examples see, *VPSB*, caps. 88, 118, pp. 40–41, 47.

¹³⁹ Byrne has noted that Diarmait's behaviour in this instance was not unusual because "Mór had been intruded equally violently by Ua Conchobair Failge in 1127 at the expense of Diarmait's sister-in-law, the daughter of Cerball Mac Fáclain." See "The Trembling Sod", p. 22. Furthermore, Diarmait later expressed his hegemony over his rival Tigernán Ua Ruairc by abducting Tigernán's wife, Derbforgaill, see chapter 5.

¹⁴⁰ Clover argues that a similar situation existed in Scandinavian society, "Regardless", p. 368.

expressions of honour and prowess. Such expressions were clearly characterised in normative masculine terms using symbols of martial prowess and warrior-hood.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, the single most important defining characteristic of social order in these societies was the dichotomy between the powerful and the powerless, the included and the excluded, the free individual and the slave.¹⁴² Although masculine characteristics and attributes defined the powerful from the powerless, power was not necessarily 'of men.' Yet, if women were able to shake off the normative notions of submissiveness and servility that were associated with their feminine physique then what implications did this have for the individual who had lost power and social status: that is for the slave? In order to provide an answer to this question we need to return, briefly, to the textual world of the Old Norse sagas.

The sagas portray a conceptual world in which charges of cowardice and effeminacy were considered to be one and the same thing.¹⁴³ This is made clear in a central incident in *Njáls Saga* which sparks a violent blood feud. The scene begins at the *Althing* (public legal gathering) at which compensation was due to be paid to the relations of a man named Hoskuldr who had been slain by Njáls son, Skarpheðinn. However, at the point of settlement, a disagreement broke out between Skarpheðinn and Flosi, a powerful relative of the dead man. Skarpheðinn taunted Flosi for accepting compensation rather than extracting revenge in the traditional manner of the blood feud by saying "...few of our kinsmen have been buried uncompensated by our wall, without our taking vengeance for them."¹⁴⁴ He backs up this charge of physical cowardice with a further insult against Flosi's manhood by stating "...if you are

¹⁴¹ Jochens, *Images*, p. 110.

¹⁴² Similarly, R.I. Moore has argued that "the most generally used social distinction was that between the *potentes*, the powerful, and *pauperes*—literally, the poor, but better translated as powerless. The latter included not only the slaves, who in many regions were still to be found working quite modest estates and even small farms, but often their masters, lacking power in the sense that they could not command other free men or brave the wrath of a great warrior..." See R.I. Moore, *The First European Revolution c. 970–1215* (Oxford/Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2000), p. 45 and also *The Formation of a Persecuting Society, Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp. 102–103.

¹⁴³ Meulengracht Sørensen, *Unmanly*, p. 11.

¹⁴⁴ *Njáls Saga*, *CSI*, vol. 3, pp. 1–220, chapter 123, p. 148, see also Meulengracht Sørensen, *Unmanly*, p. 9. "*Hafa fáir várir frændr legið óbættir hjá garði, svá at vér hafim eigi hefni*", Old Norse version from *Brennu-Njáls Saga*, E.O. Sveinsson (ed.) (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska fornritafélag, 1954), cap. 123, p. 314.

the sweetheart of the troll at Svínfell, as is said, he uses you as a woman every ninth night.”¹⁴⁵

The author of *Njáls Saga* reveals that such insults were considered to be extremely serious in Norse society and that they could act as a trigger to generations of violence.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, as in this instance, affronts to an individual’s masculinity were commonly framed by connotations of sexual irregularity and such insults were consistently denoted by the Old Norse word *níð*. The significance of *níð* insults and their potential to disrupt social order are indicated by several Scandinavian law codes which equate such verbal assaults with the crimes of homicide and rape. The following extracts are taken from the Norwegian Gulaping law code, which remained in force until the second half of the thirteenth century.

Nobody is to make verbal *níð* about another person, nor a *treníð* (wooden *níð* i.e. an insulting effigy)...No one is to make a *yki* (exaggeration) about another or libel. It is called *yki* if someone says something about another man which cannot be, nor come to be, nor have been: declares he is a woman every ninth night or has born a child or calls him *gylfin* (a werewolf or unnatural monster?). He is outlawed if he is found guilty of that. Let him deny it with a six-man oath. Outlawry is the outcome if the oath fails.¹⁴⁷

A second passage occurs in this law code under the rubric *fullréttisorð* (i.e. verbal offences for which full compensation is payable).

There are certain expressions known as *fullréttisorð*. One is if a man says to another that he has given birth to a child. A second is if a man says to another that he is *sannsorðinn* (sexually penetrated). The third is if he compares him to a mare, or calls him a bitch or harlot, or compares him with a female of any kind of animal.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. “*Pvi þú—ef þú ert brúðr Svínfellsáss, sem sagt er, hverja ína níundu nótt ok geri hann pik at konu*”, *Brennu Njáls Saga*, p. 314, see also Meulengracht Sørensen, *Unmanly*, pp. 9–10.

¹⁴⁶ Meulengracht Sørensen, *Unmanly*, p. 10.

¹⁴⁷ “*Engi maðr skal gera tungu níð um annan. Ne treníð...Engi skal gera yki um annan. Æða fiolmæle. Þat heitir yki ef maðr mælir um annan þat er eigi ma vera. Ne verða oc eigi hever verit. Kveðr hann vera kono níundu nött hveria oc hever barn boret. Oc kallar gylvin. Þa er hann utlagr. Ef han verðr at því sannr.*” *Ngl*, 1:57, translation from Clover, “Regardless”, pp. 373–374.

¹⁴⁸ “*Orð ero þau er fullrettis orð heita. Þat er eitt ef maðr kveðr at karlmanne oðrum. At hann have barn boret. Þat er annat. Ef maðr kveðr hann vera sannsorðinn. Þat er hit þriðia. Ef hann iannar hanom við meri. Æða kallar hann grey. Æða portkono. Æða iannar hanom við berende eitthvert.*” *Ngl*, 1:70, translation from Clover, “Regardless”, p. 374. Corresponding provisions appear in the twelfth-century Icelandic law tracts, see *Grágás*, vol. ii (Dennis), K 238, pp. 197–198.

Several words in particular were associated with the exposition of *nið*, these were: *ragr*, *stroðinn* and *sorðinn*.¹⁴⁹ All of these terms carry an explicit sexual meaning suggesting that the individual in question had submitted to anal penetration. However, they also carry more general pejorative connotations associating the insulted individual with cowardice, unmanliness and dishonour.¹⁵⁰ The utterance of any of these terms carried the legal penalty of full outlawry revealing the seriousness with which such *nið* insults were regarded.¹⁵¹

Although *nið* insults were charged with an explicitly sexual nature they had a deeper more symbolic meaning. They tainted the individual with normative feminine qualities of submission and a lack of manly prowess and courage in both a physical and psychological sense.¹⁵²

... a man who subjects himself to another in sexual affairs will do the same in other respects; and fusion between the notions of sexual unmanliness and unmanliness in a moral sense stands at the heart of *nið*.¹⁵³

Nið insults, then, appear to have had more to do with power or, rather, lack of it than they had to do with homosexual activity per se. So, just as women who assumed normative masculine attributes could acquire power, then so could men who experienced a loss of power be characterised through normative feminine terms and symbols. This is made clear by the binary opposition of the terms *hvatr/blauðr* which is evident in the Old Norse lexicon. *Hvatr* was a term meaning 'hard', 'strong' or 'manly and courageous' and was normally applied to men but, could equally be applied to powerful women. Despite having feminine connotations the term *blauðr*, meaning 'soft', 'cowardly' and 'effeminate', could also be applied to weak and submissive men.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, the law codes reveal that it was imperative for an individual who had become the victim of *nið* to answer the insult with immediate and

¹⁴⁹ '*Ragr*' was used to refer to men who were deemed to be 'perverse in sexual matters' (i.e. who had been anally penetrated), or who were thought to be 'versed in witchcraft' or who were thought to be 'cowardly, effeminate and morally corrupt'. '*Stroðinn*' and '*Sorðinn*' carried similar pejorative connotations but literally referred to an individual who had allowed himself to be penetrated anally. These translations are taken from Clover, "Regardless", p. 374. See also *IED* under *serða*, pp. 523, 598–599.

¹⁵⁰ Clover, "Regardless" pp. 374–375.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 374.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 375.

¹⁵³ Meulengracht Sørensen, *Unmanly*, p. 20.

¹⁵⁴ Clover, "Regardless", pp. 370–371.

violent retribution.¹⁵⁵ If an individual failed to immediately reassert his power and honour in this way then he could suffer social emasculation and be forever cast in a submissive and feminine role.

Anal penetration constructed the man who experienced it as a whore, bride, mare, bitch, and the like-in whatever guise a female creature... In the world of *nið* (male) anus and vagina are for all imaginary purposes one and the same thing. Men are sodomizable in much the way women are rapable, and with the same consequences.¹⁵⁶

The *nið* insult complex therefore has significant implications for our discussion because, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the act of rape was frequently used as a means to emphasise an individual's subjection into the condition of slavery.

The terminology of the *nið* insult makes it clear that it was only the passive and penetrated male who suffered dishonour and loss of power. The aggressive penetrator, on the other hand, was perceived as having behaved in a manly and dominant fashion.¹⁵⁷ Consequently, descriptions of cowardly men who fled from would-be attackers were frequently framed by the sexually explicit imagery of homosexual submission.¹⁵⁸ The Old Norse texts reveal that it was considered extremely dishonourable to turn one's back on an enemy and thereby display one's buttocks to him. Indeed, this was characterised in terms of sexual, as well as physical, submission. This is made clear in a scene from *Fóstbræðr Saga* in which the warrior Þormóðr comes into an armed conflict with a character named Falgeirr. During this combat both men fall into the sea and lose their weapons. Þormóðr is injured and exhausted but he manages to pull down Falgeirr's breeches and as a result his opponent drowns. The author describes Falgeirr's ignominious death using a bleakly comic innuendo of sexual submission noting that as Falgeirr drowned

¹⁵⁵ *Grágás*, vol. ii, notes that any man who suffers such an insult has the right to kill the perpetrator and if he does not then he must clear his name by bringing an immediate law suit for malicious speech against the offending individual, K 238, p. 198.

¹⁵⁶ Clover, "Regardless", p. 375.

¹⁵⁷ Meulengracht Sørensen, *Unmanly*, p. 27.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

...his buttocks and back rose up out of the water and his face suddenly turned upwards. He was dead. His mouth and eyes were open and from the look on his face it seemed as if he was grinning at something.¹⁵⁹

In addition, the Icelandic law tract, *Grágás*, clearly equated being struck whilst in such a prone position with actual physical emasculation stating that "...such is it also (a major wound) if a man castrates another or inflicts a shame-stroke on his buttocks."¹⁶⁰ The Old Norse texts generally suggest that acts of cowardice or submission could result not only in the loss of an individual's legal rights but, of his very position within the community.¹⁶¹ It seems clear that the sexual imagery employed in *míð* insults acted as a metaphor for power.¹⁶² In Norse society power and status had powerlessness and slavery as their antithesis. This is revealed by the saga author's perception that an individual's inability to prevent sexual access was deeply symbolic of the failure of that individual's power. The condition of slavery was, therefore, conceived and characterised in terms of sexual submission. Yet, the employment of graphic sexual imagery was merely an outward signifier of the ascendant physical and social power which the dominator wielded over the dominated. It made little difference whether an individual was male or female; the act of enslavement was equated with a symbolic act of rape and sexual possession irrespective of biological gender.

These conceptual values are illustrated by an incident which occurs in *Guðmundar saga dýra*.¹⁶³ The tale relates that a priest named Bjorn and his wife, Þorunnr, aided the opponents of the warrior Guðmundr. In retaliation Guðmundr placed the couple in captivity and the author tells us:

¹⁵⁹ *The Saga of the Sworn Brothers*, *CSI*, vol. 2, pp. 330–402, chapter 23, pp. 381–382. "...skýtr þá upp þjónum ok herðunum, ok við andlátit skaut upp andlitinu: var þá opinn muðrinn ok augun, ok var þá því líkast at sjá í andlitit, sem þá er maðr glottir at nokkuru." Old Norse version from *Föstbræðra Saga*, B.K. Þórólfsson and G. Jónsson (eds.), *Íslensk Fornrit*, vi (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska fornritafélag, 1943), pp. 119–276, 240. see also Meulengracht Sørensen, *Unmanly*, pp. 71–72, 110; for other analogies of male sexual submission in the saga literature see pp. 63–78.

¹⁶⁰ "Sua er oc ef maðr gellðir mann eða havggr klám havgg um þio þver." *Grágás*, vol. ii (Finsen), p. 299.

¹⁶¹ For examples see above.

¹⁶² As Clover has put it "...the 'conditions' that pushed a person into another status-worked not so much at the level of the body, but at the level of social relations." See, "Regardless", p. 379.

¹⁶³ "*Guðmundar saga dýra*" in *Sturlunga saga*, vol. i, G. Jónsson (ed.) (Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1954), pp. 259–345.

...it was decided to put Þórunnr into bed with every buffoon, and to do that to Bjorn the priest which was considered no less dishonourable.¹⁶⁴

The author clearly perceived Bjorn's failure to protect himself and his wife from captivity as a failure of both the priest's power and manhood. This, ultimately, resulted in him being treated as a woman to the point of suffering sexual abuse. Only the passive partner would suffer dishonour during such a forced homosexual union. For Bjorn's aggressors, however, the union was an experience which reaffirmed their dominance and masculinity.¹⁶⁵ Karras has suggested that in Norse society masters may have used their male slaves for precisely this purpose, "...sexual use of male slaves could have been a means of dominating, degrading and emasculating them, with no less honour to the master."¹⁶⁶ Her contention appears to be supported by the Norwegian *Gulaping* law code which states that "Every man has the same right to compensation for carnal intercourse on behalf of his thralls (male slaves) as on behalf of his bondwomen."¹⁶⁷ This code suggests that the sexual abuse of male slaves may not have been uncommon. It illustrates that the male slave had become so 'feminised' by his social condition that he was thought to be vulnerable to sexual predators. This reveals how closely psychological submission was related to physical and sexual submission in Norse society. Male slaves appear to have been viewed as shameful and immoral cowards who had lost any vestiges of their power and honour through their acceptance of subjection. Furthermore, they became characterised and associated with normative feminine qualities to the extent that they were perceived as being prone to sexual assault. As a consequence they were included under the same rule of law which, more usually, jealously guarded sexual access to an individual's women.

¹⁶⁴ "Ok var þat við orð at leggja Þórunni í rekkju hjá einhverjum gárunum, en gera þat við Björn prest, at þat þetti eigi minni svívirðing." Ibid., cap. 19, pp. 326–327. Translation taken from K.E. Gade, "Homosexuality and Rape of Males in Old Norse Law and Literature", *SS*, 58/2, 1986, pp. 124–141, 133.

¹⁶⁵ This was also true for men in the societies of ancient Rome and Greece, see Gade, "Homosexuality", p. 135. See also Meulengracht Sørensen, *Unmanly*, p. 27. A similar phenomenon exists within the closed male societies of many modern prisons, see D. Lockwood, *Prison Sexual Violence* (New York: Elsevier North Holland, 1980), pp. 46–51, 103–124.

¹⁶⁶ Karras, "Servitude and Sexuality", p. 296.

¹⁶⁷ "...Slícon rett a hvern a þælom sínum sem a ambattar legorðe." *Ngl*, cap. 198, translation from Gade, "Homosexuality", pp. 135–136.

The saga authors consistently associated effeminate, cowardly, immoral and inactive behaviour with the condition of slavery. Therefore, if an individual avoided a ‘manly’ lifestyle then he would be intimately connected with slaves and charged with softness or weakness. In the mythical *Orvar-Odds saga* the character Sjólfir was accused of lying down “at home irresolutely between a calf and a slave-woman, while others went out to fight.”¹⁶⁸ In *Króka-Refs saga* the hero, Refr, was reproached by his mother for not defending the family’s grazing rights against an aggressive neighbour. She taunted Refr for his failure to act by saying:

A daughter would have been better ... for even when our pasture is eaten down and our home field trodded to bits and one of our men killed, you simply lie here like any slave-girl and carry on as if we had nothing to worry about.¹⁶⁹

The symbolic strength of her insult was doubly reinforced by her casting Refr, as a lazy female of that lowest order. In a stanza from *Orvar-Odds saga* the character Sigurðr was insulted for his reluctance to engage in battle and was charged with being *skauð hernumin*.¹⁷⁰ The term is difficult to translate precisely but, *hernumin* appears to mean ‘battle-taken’ or ‘prisoner of war’ which has clear connotations of slavery. *Skauð*, is a feminine noun meaning, literally, ‘sheath’ but, which is frequently used to denote a genital fold or orifice, particularly, on the female body.¹⁷¹ The general sense of this insult is clear “... the insultee is trebly accused;

¹⁶⁸ “*en þú hallaðist heima á milli kynmálasamr kálfs ok þýjar*.” *Örvar Odds saga*, *Fornaldr Sögur Norðurlanda*, ii, G. Jónsson (ed.) (Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1954), pp. 199–363, 315. Later in the same verse Oddr also accuses another opponent, Sigurðr, of “...hobbling off late in the evening to the slave woman’s bed” (“...*en þú göggraðir, gárungr vesall, sið um aftan, til sængr þýjar*”). Ibid., p. 318, both translations from Meulengracht Sørensen, *Unmanly*, p. 25. For some similar examples from other sagas see Jochens, *Images*, pp. 109–110.

¹⁶⁹ “*Væri þar betri dóttir... En þótt landeign vár sé beitt upp eðr taða niðr brotin eða menn drepnir, þá liggir lydda þín ok lætr sem vér eigum ekki at amast*.” *Króka-Refs saga*, *Íslensk Fornrit*, xiv, J. Halldórsson (ed.) (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenska fornritafélag, 1959), pp. 117–160. I concur with Meulengracht Sørensen’s translation of the rare feminine noun *lydda* as ‘slave-girl’ which given the context I feel is highly appropriate here. Indeed, *lydda* meaning literally ‘a lout’ ‘a lazy bad-girl’ carries clear connotations of submission and servility, see *Unmanly*, p. 40. The term is translated simply as ‘coward’ in the *CSI* edition of this saga, see *The Saga of Ref the Sly*, *CSI*, vol. 3, pp. 397–420, 400.

¹⁷⁰ *Örvar-Odds saga*, Jónsson, p. 316.

¹⁷¹ The closest modern term of opprobrium might be ‘pussy’. The translations used are taken from Clover, “Regardless”, pp. 376–377. See also *IED* under *skauðir*, p. 540. The term *hernumin* appears to derive from the noun *hernaðr* which means ‘a harrying’ or ‘a plundering’, *ibid.*, p. 258.

of being a draft dodger, of being a prisoner of war and hence subject to whatever abuse that condition may entail, and of having no penis or one so soft and hidden-so *blauðr*-that it is useless as such.¹⁷²

In the Old Norse texts men insulted their opponents by calling them beggars, paupers, captives and slaves as frequently as they called each other women.¹⁷³ Insults were frequently constructed using sexual imagery because expressions of masculinity and sexual dominance were so closely associated with power. However, the real and destructive power of these insults was not derived from their charge of femininity but from the charge of powerlessness.¹⁷⁴ Notions of freedom and slavery were therefore fundamentally significant for defining and ordering Old Norse society. We have already seen that conceptions like this are also evident in the societies of medieval Britain. This would suggest that these societies defined and ordered themselves in a similar manner to those in Scandinavia and Iceland. Let us return the focus of our analysis to the sources from these British societies and examine whether this was so.

We have seen that Anglo-Saxon society and Old Norse society shared a similar cultural and conceptual world. These cultural affinities were reinforced by close linguistic similarities. Old English and Old Norse derive from the same Germanic linguistic stem and share an intimately related vocabulary. It may be unsurprising, then, that we are able to identify the direct equivalents of the Old Norse binary opposition of *hvatr* and *blauðr* in the lexicon of the Old English language. In Old English the adjective *hwæt* carried the meaning 'quick, active, bold, strong and brave' whilst the term *bleāþ* was used to describe an individual who was 'gentle, inactive and timid.'¹⁷⁵ Other, very similar binary oppositions are extant in the Old English lexicon. For example, the term *sofnes* could be used in a pejorative sense to denote ease and effeminacy; on the other hand, the adverb *unsofte* had a strong masculine character denoting hardness, severity and violence.¹⁷⁶ The Old English

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 377.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 376.

¹⁷⁴ "...this is *the* binary, the one that cuts most deeply and the one that matters: between the strong and the weak, powerful and powerless or disempowered, sword-worthy and unswordworthy, honoured and unhonoured or dishonoured, winners and losers." Ibid., p. 380.

¹⁷⁵ ASD, pp. 108, 571.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 894, 1129, see also J. Roberts et al. (ed.), *A Thesaurus of Old English*, vol. i (London: King's College, 1995), p. 269.

term *bædling* also had an extremely pejorative sense, meaning literally 'one who lies in bed too much' it was used to denote a 'tender fellow', an 'effeminate man' or a 'homosexual'.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, the adjective *hneslic*, also used to describe an 'effeminate man', was derived from the Old English noun *hnece* meaning 'soft', 'delicate', 'effeminate', 'weak' and 'feeble'.¹⁷⁸ These linguistic similarities would appear to suggest that similar conceptions relating masculinity with power and femininity with powerlessness existed in both Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon society.

The existence of similar conceptions regarding the feminisation of the passive individual in a homosexual union are also evident in the early Anglo-Saxon *Penitential of Theodore*.¹⁷⁹ The *Penitential* states that "Sodomites shall do penance for seven years, and the effeminate man as an adulteress."¹⁸⁰ The *Penitential's* author clearly regarded the aggressive partner in such a union as sinful; however, the greatest dishonour fell upon the passive partner who was emotively labelled as an adulteress. Frantzen has noted how similar attitudes characterise the penitential literature throughout the Anglo-Saxon era.¹⁸¹ He suggests that these penitentials say more about expressions of power than they do about the prevalence of homosexuality in Old English society.¹⁸²

That we find such conceptions within these ecclesiastical texts, which generally regarded any such irregular union as abhorrent, is indicative of the profoundly symbolic implications which such actions had for members of secular society. The ninth-century *Laws of Alfred* suggest that satirising insults were also considered serious offences in Anglo-Saxon society. *Alfred* 32 ordered that anyone who publicly slandered another individual should compensate the victim with his honour price or else lose his tongue.¹⁸³ Indeed, the association of cowardice with

¹⁷⁷ *ASD*, p. 66 and *Thes.OE*, vol. i, p. 591.

¹⁷⁸ *ASD*, p. 547 and *Thes.OE*, vol. i, p. 269.

¹⁷⁹ For an analysis of this source see chapter 2.

¹⁸⁰ "*Sidomitæ VII. annos peniteat; molles sicut adultera.*" *Pœnitentiale Theodori, II, vi, CED*, vol. iii, pp. 173–213, 178.

¹⁸¹ A.J. Frantzen, "Where the Boys Are: Children and Sex in the Anglo-Saxon Penitentials" in J.J. Cohen and B. Wheeler (eds.), *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages* (New York: Garland, 1997), pp. 43–65.

¹⁸² "Sexual relations were isomorphic to social standing, with the socially dominant person taking the sexually dominant position. Sexual acts were forced on slaves or those who had lost citizenship and had no hope of regaining social status." *Ibid.*, p. 47. Frantzen also notes that penitentials concerning such sexual abuse are associated with those concerning the sale of boys into slavery, *ibid.*, p. 50.

¹⁸³ *Alfred* 32, *Die Gesetze*, p. 66.

loss of power/status and with emasculation/effeminacy continued to have a powerful resonance for the population of England throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. The eleventh-century *Laws of Cnut* makes it clear that any man who deserted his lord through cowardice during military action risked losing his honour, his possessions, his position within society and even his life.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, whilst attempting to chastise the English people for their sinfulness and laxity the reforming Archbishop, Wulfstan II of York (d. 1023), framed his criticisms within the bleakest possible terms.

Often ten or twelve, one after another, will disgracefully insult the thegn's wife...while he who considered himself proud and powerful and brave enough before that happened, looks on. And often a slave will bind fast the thegn who was previously his lord, and make a slave of him through the wrath of God. Alas for the misery and alas for the public disgrace which the English now bear, because of the wrath of God!¹⁸⁵

Like the Old Norse saga authors then, Wulfstan regarded an individual's failure to protect his women from sexual aggression as an admission of the failure of his ability to protect himself. As a consequence, that individual who had once considered himself "proud and powerful and brave" (*rancne 7 ricne 7 genoh godne*) was now shamed, dishonoured, powerless and branded a coward. This lack of power in the face of sexual aggression is further emphasised by the image of the feminised slave reclaiming both his power and manhood from his master by placing him in fetters. Wulfstan clearly composed his sermon in order to make a significant point. Indeed, he intended to shock his audience by presenting them with the worst scenario imaginable. This scenario was charged with sexual aggression and submission. Yet, the truly significant threat with which Wulfstan was trying to frighten his audience with was a vision of a life without power. The eleventh-century author of the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* has provided us with a clear conceptual definition regarding power and social belonging which may be neatly

¹⁸⁴ *Canute II*: 77, *Die Gesetze*, p. 364.

¹⁸⁵ "... 7 oft tyn eodde twelfe ælc æfter oþrum, scendað to bysmore þæs begenes cwenan, ... þær he on locað, þe læt hine sylfne rancne 7 ricne 7 genoh godne ær þæt gewurde. 7 oft þræl þæne begen þe ær wæs his hlaford cnytt swyðe fæste 7 wýrcð him to þræle þurh Godes yrræ.", *SLAA*, lines 116–121, pp. 59–60, translation from Swanton, *ASP*, p. 120. For a fuller examination of Wulfstan's attitudes and career see chapter 4. Wulfstan also composed the law code *Cnut II* cited above, see Wormald, *Making of English Law*, pp. 126–127.

juxtaposed against Wulfstan's bleak vision of powerlessness. The author describes the noble army of Cnut's invasion fleet thus:

...in this great expedition there was present no slave, no man freed from slavery, no low-born man, no man weakened by age; for all were noble, all strong with the might of mature age, all sufficiently fit for any type of fighting, all of such great fleetness, that they scorned the speed of horsemen.¹⁸⁶

We have previously seen how the mythical Old English hero Beowulf was obliged to reassert his power and honour by demonstrating his prowess following his abduction at the hands of Grendel's mother.¹⁸⁷ Themes regarding the reassertion of power through symbols and actions of normative warrior manhood remained popular in the literary corpus of Anglo-Saxon England. Moreover, they continued to resonate strongly for English male audiences following the Norman Conquest. This is made clear in the twelfth-century text *Gesta Herewardi* in which the hero, Hereward, constantly asserts and reasserts his prowess and status by overcoming foes in a violent fashion. The author of the *Gesta* depicts several scenes that are strongly analogous to those which have already been examined in the later Norse sagas. One of these scenes, in which Hereward fights with the Scottish warrior named Ulcus Ferreus is particularly significant. It begins at the court of the Cornish prince, Alef, where Ulcus was boasting about his own prowess and "was greatly disparaging the English nation for lacking the virtue and strength and being useless in battle."¹⁸⁸ This insult questioning the prowess of the English was issued directly in front of Hereward and it may be clearly equated with the exposition of *nid* insults extant in the Old Norse sagas. In order to defend the honour of his countrymen and himself Hereward immediately retorted by accusing Ulcus of having fabricated all of his tales about victorious combats. This verbal

¹⁸⁶ "...in tanta expeditione nullus inueniebatur seruus, nullus ex servo libertus, nullus ignobilis, nullus senili aetate debilis; omnes enim erant nobiles, omnes plenae aetatis robore ualentes, omnes cuius pugnae satis habiles, omnes tantae uelocitatis, ut despectui eis essent equitantium pernicitates." *EER*, pp. 20–21. This description of Cnut's army may have been deliberately ennobled in order to make the defeat of the English more palatable i.e. they had been vanquished by a worthy enemy and not by a host of lowly born slaves.

¹⁸⁷ See above.

¹⁸⁸ "...quodam tempore Anglorum gentem nimis exprobrabat absque virtute virium esse, et in bello nil valere." *GH*, pp. 345–346. Translation from Swanton, *TLE*, p. 49. For an analysis of this text see chapter 2.

exchange subsequently resulted in a physical contest which is described in the following way:

Hereward pierced the bully's thighs with a javelin at the first sign of onset; and struggling together, they struck blows at one another for some time. Well, continually advancing and attacking, the young man avoided the blows, and ducking and weaving, often inflicted blows that were unexpected and covert. When the detestable man saw the youth's spirit, he attempted to grapple with him hand to hand, for he was stronger and very much greater in stature. But Hereward continually evaded him until, as he was in the act of bending over and less careful of his rear, Hereward thrust his sword under the mailcoat into the groin.¹⁸⁹

This encounter is clearly a conflict for power yet, it is also charged with aggressive sexual tension. At the outset Hereward affirms his prowess by piercing Ulcus's thighs with a javelin. Ulcus fights back but, is unable to land a blow on his opponent and so he physically grapples with him just as Grendel's mother grappled with Beowulf. Finally, the exhausted Ulcus allows himself to become exposed in a shameful and sexually submissive stance. The imagery employed for Hereward's subsequent *coup de grâce* needs little explanation. The scene also carries political significance as the author of the *Gesta Herewardi* was attempting to reassert fighting prowess and social validity of the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy following their crushing defeat at Hastings in 1066.¹⁹⁰ The *Gesta's* author was, therefore, reacting to the accounts of many of his contemporary twelfth-century commentators who perceived that decadence, softness and effeminacy had diminished their forebear's military competence and ultimately led to their defeat at Senlac Hill.¹⁹¹ For many of these commentators the consequences of this defeat were all too clear; it signified a total loss of English power and the enslavement of the English people. William of Malmesbury, perhaps, sums this up best when he relates that following the Battle of

¹⁸⁹ "Hereward reversus, ad primum inditionis signum, tyranni in femore fixit jaculum, et pariter congressi diu sese ictibus cædebant. Juvenis ergo semper conferendo et inferendo ictus subter fugiebat, et inclinabat ac reclinabat se, sæpe improvisos et occultos interjaciens ictus. Ut autem magnanimitatem juvenis ille vir execrandus percepit, manibus nitebatur eum comprehendere quia fortior illo erat et nimis statura prolixior. At semper Herewardus subter fugiebat, quousque inclinato illo et a tergo minus cauto, illi gladium in inguine subter loricam infixit." *GH*, p. 346, translation from Swanton, *TLL*, pp. 49–50.

¹⁹⁰ Thomas, *The Gesta Herewardi*, pp. 213–232, 222–225.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 222–225. See also *GR4*, vol. i, p. 459 and *Vita Wulfstani*, *TLL*, p. 109.

Hastings the English had “abandoned themselves and their country to slavery (*seruituti*).”¹⁹²

Clearly the defeat at Hastings did not result in the actual enslavement of the whole Anglo-Saxon population. Yet, despite the metaphorical nature of such twelfth-century statements they were founded upon a very real and tangible belief which equated military defeat with a loss power, prestige, identity and a failure of warrior manhood. Cowardice, defeat and effeminacy were consistently associated with sexual submission, servitude and slavery in the literary and narrative sources throughout the period in question. This association was still readily apparent in those twelfth-century accounts regarding the emasculation and ‘enslavement’ of the Anglo-Saxon people following the battle of Hastings. Is it any wonder, then, that the author of the *Gesta Herewardi* portrayed his hero’s conflict with Ulcus in such graphic terms? This author was not merely attempting to reassert the fighting reputation of the Anglo-Saxons; through Hereward’s actions he was attempting to reassert their honour and manhood. He did this in a traditional manner employing images and expressions of violence, virility and sexual aggression. Moreover, the close association between sexual submission and loss of power and manhood evident in such texts was almost certainly founded upon a very real and harsh reality. This reality may have been largely hidden from us because of the ecclesiastical bias of our sources. Yet, we are occasionally able to glimpse it. Indeed, it is clearly evident in William of Malmesbury’s *Vita Wulfstani* which provides the following description of a slave market in Bristol.

You could see and sigh over rows of wretches bound together with ropes, young people of *both* sexes whose beautiful appearance and youthful innocence might move barbarians to pity, daily exposed to prostitution, daily offered for sale.¹⁹³

¹⁹² “...uno prelio et ipso perfacili seruituti se patriamque pessumdederint”, *GRA*, vol. i, p. 459. During the second half of the twelfth century Gerald of Wales felt that the English had “deserved the yoke of slavery” which the Norman conquest had placed upon them because of their participation in the slave trade with Ireland. (“*Et emptores tam enormi delicto iuga servitutis iam meruisse.*”), *EH*, pp. 70–71.

¹⁹³ “*Uideres et gemeres concatenatos funibus miserorum ordines, et utriusque sexus adolescentes; qui liberali forma, etate integra, barbaris miserationi essent cotidie prostitui, cotidie uenditari.*” *VWWM*, p. 43, translation from Swanton, *TLE*, p. 126.

William was, therefore, under no illusions that enslavement meant that an individual would be expected to submit to their master in *every* respect, regardless of their physical gender.

Similar conceptions characterising the loss of power with loss of masculinity, are also evident in the medieval Welsh literature. In the tale *Math, Son of Mathonwy* the warrior Gilfaethwy obsessively desired the maiden, Goewin, who was the virgin footholder of his uncle, Math, lord of Gwynedd. Gilfaethwy conspired with his brother, the sorcerer, Gwydion, and through trickery he raped the maiden. This act took place whilst Math was distracted, preparing for a conflict with the forces of Pryderi of Deheubarth. The conflict with Deheubarth had been instigated by Gilfaethwy and Gwydion who had deliberately dishonoured Pryderi by stealing his magical swine in order to divert Math's attention away from his household.¹⁹⁴ In this instance it seems evident that "war is a condition of rape...rape is here an act of war."¹⁹⁵ Indeed, the rape of Goewin might arguably be regarded as an attempted coup for the throne of Gwynedd by these two young warriors.¹⁹⁶

When Math learned about the outrage committed on Gowein he was of course deeply dishonoured. His failure to protect his female servant had placed a significant question over his leadership capabilities. Math's dishonour was further exacerbated because he had no legal right to punish his nephews as he was also their guardian and, as such, responsible for their actions. Despite this, Math had to obtain vengeance for their crime in order to reassert his power and position. To do this he had to shame the two culprits and render them powerless. Without any available social or legal recourse he was forced to employ his magical powers. He, therefore, transformed Gwydion and Gilfaethwy into a stag and a hind, saying:

Since you are in league with each other, I will make you live together and mate with each other, and take on the nature of the wild animals whose shape you are in; and when they have offspring, so shall you.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ Millersdaughter, "Geopolitics of Incest", p. 286.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ "Rape thus figures the aggression of the male political upstart against both his lord and the customs governing inheritance practices. Both their theft of the swine and their rape of Goewin constitute Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's attempt to prove and improve their position within the political hierarchy of Gwynedd." Ibid., p. 288.

¹⁹⁷ *Mab.*, pp. 52–53. "*Canys ywch yn rwymedigaeth, mi a wnaŷ ywch gerdet y gyt, a'ch bot yn gymareddic ac yn un anyan a'r gwyduilot yd ywch yn eu rith. Ac yn yr amser y bo etiwed udunt wy, y uot ywch chwitheu.*" Welsh version from Ford, *Math vab Mathonwy*, lines 236–239, p. 7.

The following year his nephews returned from the wilderness having begotten a fawn. Math then transformed them into a male and female boar swapping their physical gender in the process. A year later they returned to him, once again, with another offspring and, once again, he transformed them and reversed their gender. He then returned them into the wilderness in the form of a male and a female wolf. After a third year they returned with a wolf cub and he subsequently restored them to their human form.¹⁹⁸ Some academics have found this segment of the tale difficult to interpret. For example W.J. Gruffydd felt that this motif of alternating gender went against the rules of folklore storytelling arguing that "...a change of sex as well as a change of species is unknown of transformation tales."¹⁹⁹ However, the eleventh-century author and his audience would have clearly understood the implications of Math's actions. In order to punish the naked sexual aggression and political ambitions of his nephews and in order to restore his own position of power and honour Math was obliged to dis-empower both Gilfaethwy and Gwydion. He, therefore, relieved them of their status and expelled them from the community to live as beasts, a fate closely comparable to that of enslavement. Just as recently enslaved individuals were sexually abused by their captors, these two shamed warriors were forced to endure a passive and sexually submissive role along with the feminine experience of conception and childbirth.

As the brothers raped Goewin, so Math rapes them, forcing them to perform sexual intercourse with one another...As they overreached their station, grasping from political dependence and servitude for the seat of sovereign power, so they are reduced to the lowliest of all worldly stations...²⁰⁰

It is interesting that following their restoration into human form it was Gilfaethwy, the instigator of the sexual aggression against Goewin, who was credited with fatherhood of the three magical offspring of this irregular union with his brother.²⁰¹ This, in turn, cast Gwydion in the more shameful passive role which may explain why he subsequently expended so much effort in aiding Lleu Llaw Gyffes in his struggle against Anranrhod. By helping Lleu to attain his passage to warrior

¹⁹⁸ *Mab*, pp. 52–54.

¹⁹⁹ Gruffydd, *Math vab Mathonwy*, p. 285.

²⁰⁰ Millersdaughter, "Geopolitics of Incest", p. 296.

²⁰¹ *Mab*, p. 54. See also chapter 2.

manhood Gwydion may well have been vicariously attempting to reassert his own.

The author of the Welsh secular text *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan* reveals that conceptions relating warrior power with sexual aggression, and weakness with submission and slavery remained prevalent in Welsh society during the twelfth century. The *Historia* gives the following account of Gruffudd's exploits at against his enemy Trahaearn at the battle of Mynedd Carn in 1081.

He instilled vigour into his men to fight with their enemies in a manly way, so that they should not offer to them their backs in any way...the clash of arms sounded frequently: the men of Gruffudd fought together splendidly and their enemies submitted to them: the sweat of toil and the blood forming running streams. Amidst that Trahaearn was stabbed in his bowels, until he was on the ground dying, grazing with his teeth on the fresh plants and groping on the tops of his arms: Gwcharki the Irishman made bacon of him as a pig...Many thousands of them were killed, and the others offered their backs to Gruffudd's men...And after causing great havoc there and a lot of ravaging, Gruffudd marched towards Arwystli...and he took its women and maidens into captivity. Thus did he pay for like to Trahaearn.²⁰²

The author of the *Historia* clearly understood the symbolic shame of submission that tainted any man who turned his back on an advancing enemy. He emphasised this through his gruesomely graphic description of the nature of Trahaearn's death. Gruffudd's enemy is said to have died in an extremely ignominious position after being stabbed in his bowels. Indeed, he draws his last breath while face down and "groping on the top of his arms".²⁰³ This would seem to be strongly analogous to the sexually submissive stances assumed by Ulcus Ferreus in the *Gesta Herewardi* or Falgeirr in *Föstbræðra saga*. Following Trahaearn's death his men are said to have "...offered their backs to Gruffudd's men" in a

²⁰² "Gyrru grymm en e wyr a oruc y emerthlad ac eu gelynyonen wraul, a hyt na rodynt udunt eu kefneu o nep ryw uod...kynnwyf er arveu a seinnyei en venych: gyrr Gruffud en dwysav en wychyr, ac eu gelynyon en darystung udunt: chweys y llawur a'r gwaet en gneithur frydeu redegauc. Ac en henne, Trahaearn a drychut en e gymperved, eny ytoed y'r llaur en varu, en pori a'e danhed y llyssyeu ir ac en palualu ar warthaf er arveu; a Gucharki Wýdel a wenaeth bacen ohonav ual o hwech...Llawer o uilyoed onadunt a las, a'r lleill a rodassant eu kefneu y wyr Gruffud ac a emchuelassant ar fo...A guede gneithur dirvaur bla eno a llawer o anreithyeu, e kerdus Gruffud parth ac Arwystli...a'e goraged a'e morynnnyon a duc yg keithiwet. Ac y velly e talws y chwyll y Drahaearn.", *HGK*, pp. 36–38, for translated pages see pp. 67–69. A very similar account is provided in the Latin version of this panygeric, see *VGC*, pp. 68–71.

²⁰³ "...en palualu ar warthaf er arveu", *ibid*.

similarly symbolic statement of submission. This act of submission subsequently resulted in their wholesale slaughter and in the enslavement of all of the women in Trahaearn's territory.

Once again, the lack of source material makes it difficult to identify the existence of similar conceptions in Scottish society. However, it has already been suggested that exceptional Scottish women may have been able to obtain and maintain powerful positions by appropriating masculine attributes. If this was the case then it would suggest that loss of power and submission might be characterised through feminine symbols. Contemporary medieval writers recognised that there were striking similarities between Scottish and Irish culture and society.²⁰⁴ It may, therefore, be possible to draw speculative analogies concerning medieval Scottish perceptions regarding loss of power through an examination of the Irish source material.

I have already argued that it was conceptually possible for women in medieval Irish society to obtain power through an appropriation of warrior symbols and normative masculine traits. Furthermore, we have seen that in the tale *The Conception of Conchobar* the Irish noblewoman, Assa, adopted a male persona and a *fian* lifestyle in order to avenge her foster family. Interestingly, like the Old Norse female warrior Hervör, she changed her name during this transformation from Assa, meaning 'gentle' to N'Assa meaning 'ungentle'.²⁰⁵ This strongly suggests that a binary opposition complex similar to the Old Norse *hvatr/blauðr* and the Anglo-Saxon *hwæt/blæþ* was extant in Middle Irish. Like their Old English counterparts, the Irish penitential authors appear to accept that homosexual unions were an inevitable phenomenon in a society which associated power with sexual dominance. Despite the penitential author's clearly homophobic attitude they do not generally appear to have considered sodomy to have been much worse than any other sin and indeed displayed surprising flexibility in their penances for it.²⁰⁶ As in the Anglo-Saxon *Penitential of Theodore* the Irish penitentials regard the real shame and dishonour to have befallen only the passive partner in such a union. The *Penitential of Cummean* notes that "a small boy misused

²⁰⁴ See chapter 2.

²⁰⁵ "Till then her name was Assa, for she was gentle. But N'Assa was her name after that, because of the greatness of her prowess and valour." See *CC*, p. 179. See also Nagy, *Wisdom*, p. 49.

²⁰⁶ L. Bitel, "Sex, Sin and Celibacy in Early Medieval Ireland", *PHCC*, 7, 1987, pp. 65–95, 77.

by an older one, if he is ten years of age, shall fast for a week; if he consents, for twenty days.”²⁰⁷ The passive partner, therefore, received the penance whilst the sexual aggressor who had, presumably, behaved in a befittingly masculine manner went unpunished. The slightness of this penance also appears to accept that forcible intercourse with other males was viewed as neither uncommon nor particularly taboo.²⁰⁸

The Irish law tracts also reveal that a powerful tradition of composing satire existed in medieval Irish society.²⁰⁹ Legally such verbal assaults were regarded as seriously as physical attacks and several types of satire required the payment of the victim’s full honour price in compensation.²¹⁰ These included: mocking a person’s appearance, composing an insulting nickname, taunting, wrongful accusation, spreading false rumours which cause an individual shame, and placing a curse.²¹¹ It was also considered a serious offence for an individual to ignore any such satire composed against them or their dependants. A king or lord who tolerated satire could lose both his honour price and his position within society.²¹² In the sagas the composition of satire frequently resulted in a total loss of honour and status and could even result in the death of the insulted party.²¹³ An Irish tale included in *Sanas Cormaic* (*Cormac’s Glossary*) relates that a king named Caier lost his territory, his wife and his kingship when his nephew, Nede, lampooned him with a satirical composition.²¹⁴ In medieval Irish society, then, the composition of satire was clearly an emotive and dangerous weapon. Like the composition of

²⁰⁷ “...*puer paruulus appressus a maiore annum aetatis habens decium, ebdomadam dierum ieiunet; si consenit, .xx diebus.*”, *Penitential of Cummean 9, The Irish Penitentials*, L. Bieler (ed. and trans.) (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1963), pp. 108–135, 128–129. This penitential appears to date from the eighth century.

²⁰⁸ See Bitel, “Sex, Sin and Celibacy”, p. 77, Frantzen, “Where the boys are”, pp. 43–65.

²⁰⁹ Kelly, *Guide*, pp. 137–138. See also F.N. Robinson, *Satirists and Enchanters in Early Irish Literature* (Cambridge: MacMillan, 1912).

²¹⁰ Kelly, *Guide*, p. 137.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

²¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 138–139.

²¹³ For examples see Robinson, *Satirists*, pp. 112–120.

²¹⁴ The satirist, Nede, then appropriated Caier’s kingdom and his woman. The dishonoured king subsequently died from shame upon seeing his nephew accompanied by his wife. Nevertheless, the satirist received his come-uppance as following Caier’s death a stone magically flew up and pierced his skull. See *Sanas Cormaic, Three Irish Glossaries*, W. Stokes (ed. and trans.) (London: Williams and Norgate, 1862), pp. xxxvii–viii. This text appears to have been compiled during the tenth century but may well date originally to the eighth century, see Robinson, *Satirists*, pp. 112–120 and McCone, *Pagan Past*, pp. 67, 172–173.

nið in Old Norse society it had the potential to challenge and defame an individual's honour, status and manhood.²¹⁵ Moreover, it was both a social and legal obligation to resist any such challenge and failure to do so could result in a loss of power and in social exclusion. In order to explore this more fully, let's briefly examine the dramatic implications of satire/curse in two closely related and significantly popular Irish tales: the *Táin bó Cúalnge* and the *Noíden Ulad* or *The Debility of the Ulidians*.²¹⁶

Noíden Ulad explains how a terrible curse had befallen the men of Ulster which resulted in them being unable to defend themselves against the ravages of queen Medb which are described in the *Táin bó Cúalnge*. The story relates that an Ulsterman named Crunnchu mac Agnomain had taken an other-worldly wife, named Macha, who had become pregnant by him. Crunnchu subsequently attended a great assembly and boasted to the king of Ulster that his wife would be able to run more swiftly than two of the king's finest horses would. The king immediately seized Crunnchu and ordered that his wife should be brought to the assembly to prove his boast. This was done and Macha, who was at this time heavy with child, was told that her husband would not be released unless she raced with the king's horses. She pleaded with the king asking to be granted an exemption from the task because she was in the "pangs of childbirth."²¹⁷ The king callously refused and the woman was forced to race against the horses. As she reached the finish line,

...a scream arose from her on account of the pain of travail. Forthwith God cleared it away for her, and she bore a boy and a girl at one birth.²¹⁸

At that same moment her unsympathetic audience were laid low "...so that the strength of all of them was the same as (that of) the woman

²¹⁵ See Kelly *Guide*, pp. 137–139. An early Irish text entitled *Cis lir fodla aire?* lists the various types of satire which may be performed on an individual. One example which is listed under the rubric 'word in opposition' has a clear sense of sexual defamation similar to *nið*, it states "he has been despoiled from below to the belt, he buys some blue blades." See H. Meaney, "Studies in Early Irish Satire", *JCS*, vol. i, pp. 199–227, 205.

²¹⁶ *Noíden Ulad: The Debility of the Ulidians*, V. Hull (ed. and trans.), *Celtica*, vol. viii, Dublin 1968, pp. 1–42. Hull suggests that this tale was composed during the eleventh century.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 36–37.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

who was in travail.”²¹⁹ Macha then placed the following curse on all the men of Ulster.

The shame that you have inflicted upon me shall be indeed a disgrace to you from now on. When things shall be most difficult for you, all those of you who guard this province shall have only the strength of a woman in childbirth; and as long as a woman is in childbirth, so long shall you be, namely to the end of five days and four nights, and, moreover, it shall be on you unto the ninth (generation), that is to say, the life-span of nine persons.²²⁰

This tale, therefore, acts as a prologue to the *Táin Bó Cúalnge* in which the Medb's forces ravaged Ulster and enslaved its women and youths. They were able to do this with ease, because Ulster's warriors were unable to defend themselves due to the debilitating curse placed upon them by Macha. Only the youthful hero Cú Chulainn remained unaffected by the curse and stood as a solitary rampart in defence of Ulster, single handedly managing to occupy Medb's army.

Bitel has interpreted Macha's curse in *Noínden Ulad* as an authorial device enabling the Ulstermen to gain strength through their participation in the uniquely female experience of childbirth. She feels that in doing this the storyteller was attempting to seize ideological control of reproduction thus "...the Ulstermen could not bring forth babies, but their labour produced something even more valuable to Irish society, warriors reborn with extraordinary prowess.”²²¹ However, a more convincing explanation would seem to be that Macha's curse bestowed weakness and powerlessness upon the Ulstermen. Indeed, physical competitions and sports were seen as an exclusively male pastime in medieval Ireland yet, at the assembly of the Ulsterman the king forced a woman into participating in such sports for his own sadistic pleasure. Macha therefore had symbolic significance because unlike Medb she was coerced into adopting a masculine role. Moreover, she was forced to do this during the most definitively feminine time of her life cycle: the final phase of pregnancy. This forced transgression of gender roles subsequently brought down a dramatic debility upon the king and his men. Just as Macha has been forced to behave as a man; her curse forced the men of Ulster to experience the feminine pain of child-

²¹⁹ Ibid., p. 38.

²²⁰ Ibid., p. 38.

²²¹ Bitel, *Land*, p. 82.

birth. In placing this curse she deliberately 'feminised' them, rendering them powerless just as Math had rendered Gwydion and Gilfaethwy powerless.²²² It was not strength, then, but vulnerability, weakness and loss of power which Macha's curse bestowed. This is made explicit "...those of you who guard this province shall only have the strength of a woman in childbirth."²²³ In the subsequent story of the *Táin* the Ulstermen's weakness and submission is repeatedly emphasised by their inability to prevent the enslavement of their women and youths. This is further reinforced by the fact that their assailant is a woman who was attempting to reassert her own power through an appropriation of normative masculine warrior behaviour. Only Cú Chulainn remained unaffected by the debility and was able to continue to defend the territory of Ulster. The young hero appears to have been immune to the curse because he was still an adolescent and not yet considered to be a man.²²⁴ Cú Chulainn, the beardless youth, therefore, represented the warrior initiate who remained as the last line of defence against any aggressive cultural encroachment.

The *Táin* goes on to relate that the Ulstermen only regained their strength and warrior manhood after the wise warrior, Sualtaim, reproached them for failing to prevent the enslavement of their women and boys and the theft of their cattle. Sualtaim repeated his reproach over and over again bringing shame upon king Conchobar and his men. Finally, Cathbath the druid stated "more fitting is death and destruction for the man who so incites the king."²²⁵ Sualtaim was subsequently decapitated for his presumptuousness. However, his severed head still cried out "Men are slain, women carried off, cattle driven away, O Ulstermen!"²²⁶ Conchobar replied to this by saying "A little too loud is that cry... I shall bring back every cow to its byre and enclosure, every woman to her abode and dwelling, after victory in battle and combat

²²² The tale makes it clear that the curse fell only upon the men of Ulster, "this affliction did not used to be upon women and boys", *NU*, p. 38.

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

²²⁴ Medb refers to Cú Chulainn as a "young beardless sprite" who "seemed to her to be no more than a boy." When the tough warrior Cú mac Da Lóth was asked by Medb to fight Cú Chulainn he initially refused stating to her "Ye think little of our valour, ye think it wonderful when ye match me with a tender stripling such as he! Had I myself known (why I was summoned) I should not have come for that. I should think it enough that a lad of his own age from among my household should go to oppose him on the ford." *TBC*, pp. 177, 186, 189.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

and contest.”²²⁷ Following this cry Conchobar magically recovered his strength and mustered all of the warriors of Ulster. His first action following this recovery is extremely significant. Once his host was assembled he marched forthwith to Áth nIrmide and

...there they met eight score big men of the household of Ailill and Medb with eight score captive women. One captive woman held prisoner by each man of them, that was their share of the plunder of Ulster. Conchobar and Celtchair struck off their eight score heads and freed their eight score captives.²²⁸

Conchobar, thereby, reclaimed his power, honour and warrior manhood by reclaiming the freedom of his enslaved women. The resumption of his power is further emphasised by the impressive stature of his opponents.

Bitel’s argument that the curse of Macha was symbolic of the male acquisition of the “ideological control of reproduction” must therefore be called into question.²²⁹ Indeed, childbirth was a symbol of weakness rather than power as it was associated with the stigma of sexual submission. The *nið* insults of the Old Norse sagas and legal texts clearly reveal that men who were accused of bearing children were also being accused of dishonour, cowardice and an inability to protect themselves. It appears far more likely, then, that the debility of the Ulstermen was informed by a fear of submission which was, in turn, clearly associated with normative feminine symbols; it provides a dramatic example of the palpable fear of powerlessness and slavery that we find evident in many medieval narratives and sagas. This fear was never very far from the minds of the male audience of the *Táin* who lived in a society where honour and power were fragile and loseable attributes. As Bitel has argued in her later monograph “Slavery was a gendered issue in the minds of ninth-century Irish writers: to be powerless and exposed was to be female”.²³⁰ The revival of the Ulstermen’s prowess stemmed not from their feminine experience, then, but rather from their rejection of it. These warriors were only ‘reborn’ or, indeed, ‘emancipated’ when they reasserted their power and warrior manhood. They were

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid., p. 249.

²²⁹ Bitel, *Land*, p. 82.

²³⁰ Bitel, *Women in Early Medieval Europe*, p. 193.

only able to achieve this by asserting their domination over other men and reclaiming from them the freedom of their women.

Slavery and Gender

The Irish sources suggest that medieval Irish society was structured upon a conceptual framework which regarded overt expressions of warrior prowess to be of paramount significance to an individual's place within that society. Indeed, expressions of normative masculinity were intimately bound up with conceptions of power, strength and freedom in all of the societies of medieval Britain. On the other hand, normative femininity was often associated with powerlessness, submission and servility. Thus the labels of masculinity and femininity frequently acted as a metaphor for a more deeply ingrained and significant division of society: the conditions of freedom and slavery. This categorisation was so profoundly powerful and emotive that it shaped psychological perceptions concerning the moral character and even the physical appearance of any given individual. Such psychological preconceptions are clearly evident in the highly satirical and sexually explicit Latin poem *Moriuht* penned by the eleventh-century Norman ecclesiast Warner of Rouen. Warner, a contemporary of Dudo of St. Quentin, composed this somewhat pornographic invective as a praise work to Robert, Archbishop of Rouen, during the first quarter of the eleventh century.²³¹ Christopher McDonough has argued convincingly that the poem was intended, first and foremost, as a literary exercise; highlighting the importance of good Latin grammar and emulating the classical traditions of satire/invective evident in the works of Horace and Virgil.²³² Nevertheless, the poet was also drawing on the traditions of satirical composition and insult complexes steeped within his own Scandinavian heritage.²³³ Much of the action within the poem takes place in a Hiberno-Norse Irish Sea context for which the port of Rouen was very much a significant trading location.²³⁴ As such the

²³¹ *Moriuht*, pp. 5–7.

²³² *Ibid.*, pp. 1–55.

²³³ A conclusion reached also by McDonough see *Moriuht*, pp. 21–22 and E. Van Houts, “Scandinavian Influence in Norman literature of the Eleventh Century”, *ANS*, vi, 1983, pp. 105–121.

²³⁴ Van Houts, “Scandinavian Influence”, pp. 107–108.

poem clearly falls within both the chronological and cultural sphere of this discussion.

The object of Warner's scorn was an allegedly immodest and grammatically inept Irish poet named Moriuhth, who may or may not have been based upon an actual individual known to the author.²³⁵ The poem is particularly enlightening for this discussion because it describes in detail how Moriuhth and his wife were enslaved by Viking pirates and how they eventually gained their freedom. The poet therefore provides some significant, if stereotypical, impressions of the likely experiences of recently enslaved captives. Moreover, the poem is indicative of eleventh-century cultural conceptions regarding the stigma of servitude, the shame associated with captivity/enslavement and the way in which graphic sexual imagery might be employed to emphasise conditions of power and powerlessness.

The poem begins with a few words of praise for Robert, archbishop of Rouen. The author then moves on to discuss the lascivious shortcomings of the Irish, Moriuhth's fellow countrymen, whose sinful behaviour had invoked God's punishment in the shape of Viking ravages.²³⁶ Warner complains bitterly that Moriuhth is "considered such a scholar" by his contemporaries and so begins his systematic character assassination of this unworthy literary nemesis. This character assassination essentially constitutes a lengthy and detailed exposition of the *nið* insult complex in its most extreme and graphic form. Warner seeks to portray his subject in the worse possible terms by relating the tale of how Moriuhth came to be in Rouen. The Irishman's humiliating travelogue is instigated by the abduction of his wife by Viking raiders:

Foreigners invade the territory of the Irish—the pain of it! Next, Moriuhth's wife is seized and taken away. No time is lost, as Moriuhth, transformed into a stinking goat, boards ship and goes after Glicerium (his wife)... He is captured by the Vikings and vigorously tied up with chains... As his body, struck powerfully by their whips and hands, is spun from their hands across the deck of the ship, the Vikings stand about and marvel at the active prodigy, as they piss on the middle of his bald head. The prick melts down, and he is led around (by the prick) as a goat (is led around by the horn)... He is subjected to insults and then in the place of a wife he is forced by the Vikings to perform the sexual services of

²³⁵ For a discussion see *Moriuhth*, pp. 40–45.

²³⁶ Indeed, Warner provides a very early example of a continental ecclesiastical characterising the Irish as sexually corrupt barbarians, a view which was to become far more prevalent amongst influential reformers during the twelfth century, see chapter 5.

a wife. Moriuh, dressed in furs like a bear, is stripped, and before the sailors, bear, you amorously sport and strike. Yet, not unwillingly does he play Ravola for everyone with his arse. Struck by a penis, he groans—alas for the unfortunate man! After experiencing in this way these dangers to the full, as he deserved, the Irishman is got rid of by sale in Corbridge for a paltry price.²³⁷

Warner therefore further reinforces the evidence from many other medieval sources indicating that women would have been a key target for ravaging war bands in this period. Moriuh's failure to protect his own wife is equated with an immediate loss of power and honour. Indeed, it is at this point in the poem, rather than at the point at which he is enslaved, that he is said to have been "transformed into a stinking goat".²³⁸ The fact that Moriuh and his wife were consistently characterised by Warner as goats, or having goat-like qualities, is highly significant. In many medieval European cultures the goat was associated with lasciviousness, sinfulness and filth (both physical and spiritual); qualities which were also consistently associated with slaves and the condition of servitude.²³⁹ Symbolic associations relating goats with the sins of the flesh, evident within both the biblical traditions and more secular bestiaries, were founded upon perceptions regarding that animal's perceived uncontrolled and indiscriminate sexual impulses.²⁴⁰ The goat was therefore symbolic of the mind's loss of control over the body's sinful urges thus clearly paralleling the condition of slavery in which somatic control was appropriated by another individual. Furthermore, Karras has suggested that the goat, with its uncontrollable urges, also

²³⁷ "Scottorum fines inuadunt, pro dolor, hostes, Femina mox capitur ducitur et Moriuh. Nec mora, cum Moriuh, olidum mutatus in hyrcum, Naues ingreditur, Glycerium sequitur... A Danis capitur, uinculis et forte ligatur... Truncus ut e manibus nauis per plana rotatur. Ictus uerberibus fortiter et manibus, Stant Dani circum, mirantur mobile monstrum, Mingentes calui in medio capitis. Mentula decoquitur, per cornu fertur ut hyrcus... Subditur obprobriis et tunc pro coniuge Danis. Coniugis officium cogitur esse suum. Nodatur Moriuh, setis uestitus ut ursus, Et coram nautis ludis et, urse, feris. Non tamen inuitus fit Rauola podice cunctis, Percussus genio ingem [u]it, heu! misero. Haec ita perpeusus merito discrimina Scottus In Corbric paruo distrahitur pretio." Moriuh, pp. 76–77.

²³⁸ "Olidum mutatus in hyrcum", *ibid.*

²³⁹ R.M. Karras, "Separating the Men from the Goats: Masculinity, Civilization and Identity Formation in the Medieval University" in J. Murray (ed.), *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West* (New York: London, Garland, 1999), pp. 189–213, 200–201.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 201–204.

carried a powerful symbolic association with femininity in the medieval context.²⁴¹ This association is readily apparent in Warner's poem.

Following the shame and dishonour brought upon him by the abduction of his wife Moriuhth initially attempts to follow an honourable and manly path and immediately sets out to reclaim her. But any sense that he will be able to regain his honour in this way is quickly undermined by his subsequent capture and enslavement. Thus the symbolic emasculation brought about by the abduction of Moriuhth's wife is reinforced and reemphasised by his physical emasculation/feminisation at the hands of the Viking raiders. Moriuhth's inability, then, to protect his woman also reflects on his inability to protect himself and he is left exposed and powerless. The account which Warner provides of the degrading and dehumanising ritual which Moriuhth experiences following capture is disturbing yet, one suspects, not wholly unrealistic or unusual.²⁴² The war band's solidarity and sense of power would have been reinforced by such activities, moreover, Moriuhth's rape at their hands was clearly intended to trigger the 'shame-humiliation' affect, which certainly suited Warner's literary purposes, but which would have also facilitated Moriuhth's subjection before sale. Indeed, Warner's deep desire to denigrate the subject of his poem was clearly informed by a knowledge and understanding of the kind of treatment experienced by the slave cargoes. Cargoes which he, himself, would have witnessed at the ports of Normandy and which he tells us were "full to bursting with the merchandise of wealth supplied by the Vikings".²⁴³

Let us now examine Moriuhth's ordeal in a little more detail. First of all he is vigorously chained, whipped and beaten. Then he is clearly stripped naked as his Viking captors are said to marvel mockingly at his erect penis. As we have seen, throughout human history shackling, violence and enforced nakedness are well tested strategies for shaming, degrading and subjecting opponents.²⁴⁴ Yet, it seems highly unlikely that Moriuhth would have been sexual aroused at this juncture and his "active prodigy" is clearly employed as an authorial device to highlight

²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 203, she also notes that goats were associated with outcasts and out-groups such as the Jews.

²⁴² Indeed, it is similar in many respects to the ritualistic sexual violence directed towards the female slave in Ibn Fadlan's account of the Rus chief's funeral discussed in Chapter 2.

²⁴³ "*Sepius a Danis merce refertus opis*", *Moriuhth*, pp. 90–91.

²⁴⁴ Aldhouse-Green, "Chaining and Shaming", pp. 319–340 and "Ritual Bondage", pp. 155–163.

his subsequent emasculation/feminisation. Following one final act of degradation, in which the Viking's collectively urinate on Moriuh't's head, the vestiges of his manhood and power are stripped away and this is symbolised as his erect penis "melts down". The feminised and the now compliant captive is then "led around (by the prick) as a goat (is led around by the horn)".²⁴⁵ The rape scene then follows in which Moriuh't is mockingly dressed in the furs like a bear; the warrior accoutrements of the *berserkr* employed here in bleakly comic juxtaposition to the captive's powerless, shameful and feminised state. The mocking tone is completed with the charge that Moriuh't somehow enjoyed the experience of being the feminised/passive partner in this vicious Viking gang-bang.²⁴⁶

Following this Moriuh't is sold at the Northumbrian port of Corbridge where he fetches a paltry price highlighting his lack of worth. His degradation and feminisation are then further reinforced when he is purchased by a group of women; the nuns of Corbridge. However, Warner's depiction of Moriuh't's actions following this sale is very interesting. Firstly, Moriuh't pronounces to his owners that he is a poet in the vein of Homer and Virgil. He then proceeds to systematically seduce the nuns and this is described by the author in the following manner:

You nuns, set in a special honour of sanctity (you are in danger)...in your crowded midst there lives a very great warrior. You are destined to be split apart by the stiffly erect sword of "himself".²⁴⁷

Warner's portrayal of Moriuh't as a virile warrior/poet was clearly intended to be both satirical, comical and to provide further evidence regarding his lascivious nature. Yet, his recovery of his intellectual faculties along with his sexual prowess also clearly reflected an attempt to recover his power and honour. Through the sexual domination of his new mistresses Moriuh't appears to be reclaiming his manhood. This is emphasised by his explicit desire to sire, by these brides of Christ, one hundred warriors who would go on to "plunder and destroy tyrannical Rome, and empty all of Italy of its people."²⁴⁸ In this episode, then,

²⁴⁵ "*Mentula decoquitur, per cornu fertur ut hyrcus*", *ibid.*, pp. 76–77.

²⁴⁶ For a full and insightful analysis of the terminology used during this rape scene see McDonough, *Moriuh't*, pp. 134–137.

²⁴⁷ "*O monache posite sub religionis honore (Vulcanum stuppis stultus enim tribuit; Inter uos habitat stipatas maximus heros), Findende gladio ipsius ex rigido*", *ibid.*, pp. 78–79.

²⁴⁸ "*His Corbric natis Roman super a<u>cta tyra<n>nam Vastaret totam gentibus Italiam.*" *Ibid.*, pp. 80–81.

Warner may have been playing upon commonly held fears regarding the suppressed power/masculinity of the male slave and, indeed, concerns regarding the dishonour brought about by unions between male slaves and their mistresses. Warner suggests that such dishonour was experienced by the people of Corbridge once they had learned of Moriuh't's deeds in the nunnery. The subsequent consequences for Moriuh't were certainly severe and he was arrested and brutally beaten before he managed to escape.

Moriuh't fled from Corbridge in a small boat, once again, apparently a free man. He then made a sacrificial offering of a young boy to pagan gods in an attempt to find out the whereabouts of his wife. This sacrificial offering was clearly intended by the author to characterise his subject as a pagan monstrosity. However, once again, his account may be reflective of certain common fears, also evident in the contemporary penitential literature and law codes, regarding the subversive and clandestine religious practices conducted by slaves.²⁴⁹ Yet, Moriuh't was not able to breathe free air for very long. Warner relates that soon after his escape from Corbridge the fugitive was once again captured, bound, raped, re-enslaved and re-feminised by a second band of Vikings. Following, this Moriuh't was sold at a port in Saxony where he was again purchased by a woman for a pitiful sum; this time by a widow. Moriuh't once again sought to regain his manhood by indiscriminately exercising his sexual prowess as we are told that he "conquered countless young men, nuns, widows, and married women".²⁵⁰ Warner states that these activities did not restore Moriuh't's honour, yet they did eventually result in his manumission because "...he laboured like a slave in the bed of his beloved mistress" and "for this reason he deserved to gain his freedom from her."²⁵¹ Interestingly, following his manumission Moriuh't made a further human sacrifice to his pagan gods, this time a young virgin girl was the victim. He was subsequently rewarded with a vision that his wife was residing as a slave in Rouen and it is in this familiar locality that Warner concludes the final part of his tale.

²⁴⁹ See chapter 2.

²⁵⁰ "*nam multos pueros, monachas, uiduasque subegit*", *ibid.*, pp. 84–85.

²⁵¹ "*Vi dicunt, domine lecto seruiuit amate; Idcirco meruit liber ab hac fieri*", *Moriuh't*, pp. 84–85. Warner goes on to taunt "You gained your liberty by fucking her stiffly erect clitoris" "*Tu liber uulue pro coitu rigide*", *ibid.*

After being granted his freedom by one woman Moriuhth then sought the assistance of another. He travelled to the Norman ducal court at Rouen where he obtained an audience with countess Gunnor, the mother of Robert, Archbishop of Rouen. Moriuhth pleaded with the countess to assist him in securing the freedom of his wife, Glicerium. The countess agreed to help and Moriuhth subsequently travelled to the nearby port of Rudoil where his wife was living as a slave under the ownership of a poor man's widow named Baucis.²⁵² Warner suggests that Glicerium was being employed as both a domestic drudge and prostitute as Moriuhth found her scantily clad with her breasts clearly visible. Indeed, her owner commented to Moriuhth that "...so many parasites bring their smacking lips (to her) as the flowers of the earth and the nuts of the hazel tree".²⁵³ The dishonour that Moriuhth felt at this discovery is expressed by the words placed into the mouth of the character himself.

How I wish I was now dead. Savage death, why do you delay? O my Glicerium, you deserve to be grieved over by me in my unhappiness for all eternity. I see your face which has undergone so many hardships.²⁵⁴

Baucis then invited Moriuhth to "get to know the merchandise" whom she confided she had purchased for half a *dénier*.²⁵⁵ She went on to complain that Glicerium had not given up hope of seeing her husband again, commenting that this "rotten slave is always seeking to find throughout the nation her own love."²⁵⁶ On acquiring this information Moriuhth returned to Gunnor's castle forthwith and obtained the necessary amount to redeem his spouse. Yet, despite his initial joy at obtaining Glicerium's freedom Moriuhth's mood soon blackened when he discovered that his wife had given birth to a daughter who was also being held as a slave. Gunnor took pity on him and also assisted in securing the release of Moriuhth's offspring. Thereafter, much to Warner's apparent chagrin, Moriuhth began to reassert his honour by exercising

²⁵² Ibid., pp. 90–93 McDonough suggests that this port might be either Rueil or Vaundreuil both situated to the South East of Rouen, *ibid.*, p. 166.

²⁵³ "*Tot quoque Gnatones illi popisma ferentes, Quot terre flores, quot corili<que> nuces.*" Ibid., pp. 92–95.

²⁵⁴ "*Vtinam modo mortuus essem! Cur, fera mors, tardas?*" *ingemnat lacrimans. 'O mea Glicerium misero ploranda per eum, Tot mala perpessam cerno tuam faciem.'*" Ibid., pp. 90–91.

²⁵⁵ "*si uis tu noscere mercem*", *ibid.*, pp. 92–93.

²⁵⁶ "*mea semper putida serua. Quaerit per populum, frater, amare suum*", *ibid.*

his intellectual skills at Gunnor's court. Thus, after reclaiming his women Moriuhth began to set about regaining his power and manhood:

When Moriuhth had taken under his protection his goat and her little she-goat, he had the boldness to declare that he was an eminent man of letters. He started to exalt himself above all poets who were eloquent, above mighty Homer, Virgil and Statius.²⁵⁷

In the final lines of the poem, then, Warner continues to insult the revitalised Moriuhth for his intellectual arrogance, presumption and overactive sexual proclivities.

This closing section of the poem is both interesting and enlightening for a number of reasons. Warner continues his assault on Moriuhth's character by highlighting his inability to reclaim his wife in a manly fashion. Rather, he is forced to resort to begging for the help of a woman, albeit a powerful one, in the shape of Countess Gunnor. The association of shame and sexual violence that pervades the condition of the slave is once again illustrated by the plight of Glicerium who has been forced into prostitution to the further dishonour of her male guardian. The hereditary taint and natal alienation of the servile condition is also evident from the enslavement of Glicerium's young child whose birth and existence Moriuhth appears to have been unaware of prior to obtaining his wife's freedom. Yet, in spite of Warner's clear desire to denigrate his subject in the worst possible terms, his portrayal of Moriuhth still evokes a resilient, if flawed, character who manages to overcome a catalogue of damaging and traumatic experiences and, through whatever means, carves out a niche for himself at the ducal court. Despite Moriuhth's sinful and paganistic disposition then, Warner inadvertently portrays him in a rather sympathetic light which to some extent suggests that Warner's account was not wholly a work of satirical fiction.²⁵⁸ Although Warner was clearly drawing on classical exemplars, he was also writing in a cultural context which related the loss of power and honour with violence, shame, sexual submission and the taint of servitude. Indeed, loss of power was equated with loss of control over one's body, graphically symbolised in Warner's poem by the sexual penetration of both Moriuhth and Glicerium. Thus Warner's satirical

²⁵⁷ "*Adductaque capre Moriuhth proprieque capelle, Suscipitur magna non sine laetitia. Sesepta capra Scottus capreque capella. Ausus se magnum dicere grammaticum, Coepit doctiloquis semet preferre poetis, Homero magno, Virgilio, Statio*", *ibid.*, pp. 94–95.

²⁵⁸ A possibility also entertained by McDonough, *ibid.*, pp. 40–45.

work provides a reflective, if stereotypical perception, of the process by which an individual experienced enslavement. His account suggests that slave holding constituted such a normal and mundane fact of life in eleventh-century Norman society that even lowly individuals like the widow, Baucis, might have one or two slaves. Furthermore, Warner's poem clearly depicts the regions of Ireland, Britain and Northern Europe as an interconnected maritime zone whose coastal ports were bustling with slave trading activity and human merchandise.

The Old Norse poem *Rígsþula*, a relative contemporary of Warner's *Moriuht*, reveals some very similar conceptualisations regarding those individuals tainted by the condition of slavery. *Rígsþula* discusses the mythical genesis of the various orders of society.²⁵⁹ The poem tells how the ancient Norse god, Heimdall, symbolically lay down in bed between various couples who then went on to produce offspring thus giving rise to various social classes. Although the poem was composed in Old Norse it contains strong Irish and Anglo-Saxon cultural influences. For example, the motif in which a God sleeps with a couple in order to ensure their fertility was derived from Irish mythological tales. Moreover, the Old Irish word *rí* (king) features prominently in the title. Anglo-Saxon influences are also revealed through the author's employment of Old English vocabulary.²⁶⁰ Both Pelteret and Dronke have suggested that the poem was originally composed within the Anglo-Norse communities of north-east England during the first quarter of the eleventh century.²⁶¹ The poem, which was also intended to be comical, provides an indicator of how similar ideas and values regarding social order were held within the secular communities of Ireland, England and the Danelaw. *Rígsþula*, thereby, provides us with a further example of how the societies of medieval Britain can be seen to occupy a similar 'conceptual' world.

The poet provides a relatively detailed physical description of the couples from each social class. For example, the character Karl who begat the class of yeomen was said to be

²⁵⁹ *Rígsþula* in *The Poetic Edda*, U. Dronke (ed. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), vol. ii, pp. 161–240.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 202–208 and D. Pelteret, "The Image of the Slave in some Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse Sources", *Slavery and Abolition*, vol. 23, 2, 2002, pp. 75–88, 83.

...red-haired, rosy boy.
His eyes rolled.
He began to grow
And gain strength well.²⁶²

Whilst his good wife was described as

A dangling-keyed girl
goatskin-kirtled...
Daughter-in law she is called,
took her place beneath the bridal veil.
They dwelt as man and wife,
Dispensed rings.²⁶³

The character Jarl, who begat the class of noblemen was described thus

Blond was his hair,
brilliant his cheeks,
baleful were his eyes
as a baby snake's²⁶⁴

Jarl's prospective noble bride, Erna, was said to be

A slim fingered girl,
White-gleaming and wise-
She was called Erna...
Wedded her to Jarl-
She went beneath the bridal veil.²⁶⁵

At the bottom of the social order was Thrall who begat the class of slaves. He was described in this way:

There was on his hands
wrinkled skin,
gnarled knuckles,
(scabbed nails),
fingers thick,
face unlovely,

²⁶² "rauðan ok ríðan. Ríðuðu augu. Hann nam at vaxa ok vel dafna." *Ríg*, p. 167.

²⁶³ "hanginluklu, geitakyrtilu...Snor heiter sú, settiz under rípti. Biuggu hión, bauga deildu." *Ibid.*, p. 167.

²⁶⁴ "Bleikt var hár, biarter vangar, otul vóru augu, sem yrmíngi." *Ibid.*, p. 170.

²⁶⁵ "miófingrað[r]í, hvítri ok horskri- hét [s]ú Erna...giptu Iarli- gekk hón und líni." *Ibid.*, p. 171.

bent back,
long heels.²⁶⁶

Thrall's woman was said to be

...a gadabout girl.
Soil was on the soles of her feet,
Her arm sunburnt,
Down curving her nose-
her name, she said, was Thrall-woman.²⁶⁷

The composer of *Rígsþula* clearly made two significant assumptions. Firstly, those who existed at the lowest level of society would be stigmatised by both physical and moral deformities.²⁶⁸ Secondly, an individual's aesthetic appearance and moral character were directly related to the level of power which that individual exercised; the more powerful one was then the greater was one's beauty. This in turn suggests that conceptions of power holding operated on a continuum or spectrum which placed the powerful free noble at one end and the powerless slave at the other. Thirdly, that dress and hair were important physical markers used to express both beauty and power, especially in women. The physical appearance of Karl's wife, Snør, is hardly commented upon, however, we are given quite intimate detail about her dress. Significantly, she is depicted as a respectably clothed woman responsible for the keys of the homestead. Both the goodly Snør and the noble Erna are depicted as taking the veil which will cover their hair and symbolically signify their sexual inaccessibility to any man except their respective husbands. On the other hand, the poet fails to comment upon either the dress or hair of the bondwoman, Thír. Her lack of power is not

²⁶⁶ "Var þar á hondum, hrökkit skinn, kropner knúar, [kartnegl], fingr digrer- fülligt andlit, lotr hrygger, langer hælex." Ibid., p. 164.

²⁶⁷ "gengilbeina. Aurr var á ilium, armr sólbrunninn, niðrbiúgt ned- nefndiz Þír." Ibid., p. 164.

²⁶⁸ Thrall and Thír's sons were said to be called names such as Clump, Clegg, Stinker, Sluggish and Grizzled (*Klúrr, Kleggi, Fúlner, Drottr, Hosver*). Significantly, one son was also named *Kefser* which means 'bedmate' which would suggest that male slaves were thought to be as sexually accessible as female slaves were. Their daughters carried equally pejorative labels such as Stumpy, Dumpy, Bulgingcalves, Eaglenose, Greatgossip, Tatteredcoat and Craneshanks (*Drumba, Kumba, Ökkvinkálfa, Eikintiasna, Totrughypia, Tronubeina*), *ibid.*, p. 164. In this sense both social and physical deformity were closely associated. Indeed, slavery, like leprosy, was equated with both moral and physical ugliness, see Moore, *Formation*, pp. 61, 102–103.

only signified by her physical ugliness but, also by the absence of any material finery or adornment about her person. Despite her union with Thrall the poet understood that there would have been little point in her taking the veil as her status would have tainted her character with sexual accessibility.²⁶⁹ The poet further emphasises this by referring to her as a *gengilbeina* which Dronke translates as a ‘gadabout girl’ and which certainly appears to carry a pejorative sense which is suggestive of Thír’s sexual transience.²⁷⁰

Cultural conceptualisations such as these were almost certainly common currency in the societies of medieval Britain. In the lexicon of Old English the adjective *freolic* could be used to denote an individual’s admirable qualities of both a social, a moral and a physical sense. It labelled an individual as both ‘free’ or ‘noble’ as well as being able to denote that they were ‘comely’, ‘goodly’ and ‘attractive’.²⁷¹ On the other hand, the adjective *forlegenlic* meaning ‘ugly’ or ‘mean looking’ is derived from the morally pejorative term *forlegen* meaning ‘rape’, ‘fornication’ or ‘dishonour and defilement’.²⁷² Such pejorative characteristics would have been intimately associated with slavery in the Anglo-Saxon psyche. This is made clear in *Riddle 12* extant in the *Book of Exeter* which reveals the kind of behaviour which was to be expected of a slave women.

Sometimes the dark-haired Welsh maid
Brought from afar carries and presses me,
A foolish drunken girl at dark of night
Wets me beside the fire, sticks in my bosom
Her wanton hand, constantly turns me around.²⁷³

The description of this slave being a “dark-haired” Welsh maid is particularly significant as it casts the slave, once again, in a lascivious

²⁶⁹ Similar attitudes to these are also visible in *Laxdæla Saga*. When the rich Icelandic farmer, Hoskuldr, purchased an Irish princess as a slave and slept with her he failed to recognise the innate nobility of his new concubine. It was only after he had rewarded her with a fine dress that he finally recognised her royal breeding. The importance of dress and physical appearance in both *Rígsþula* and *Laxdæla saga* helps to illustrate the fundamental significance which expressions of power, or the lack of them, had for defining how an individual was perceived within medieval Norse society. See *LS*, chapters 12–13, pp. 10–13.

²⁷⁰ *Ríg*, p. 164.

²⁷¹ *ASD*, p. 334.

²⁷² *Thes.OE*, vol. i, pp. 425, 589.

²⁷³ “*hwilum feorran broht wonfeax Wale weged and þyð, dol druncmenn deorcum nihtum, wæteð in wætre, weyrmeð hwilum, segre to fyre; me on sæðme sticaph, hygegalan hond, hwyrfed geneahhe.*” *EB*, *Riddle 12*, lines 7–12, p. 186. For comment on this text see chapter 2.

feminine form. The girl's free flowing hair clearly denotes her sexual availability and its dark coloration would have almost certainly been considered an unattractive feature in Germanic Anglo-Saxon society.²⁷⁴ In a similar manner to Warner's *Moriut*, the girl's physical unattractiveness is associated with the reprehensible moral characteristics; being both foolish, drunken and sexually lax.²⁷⁵ The *Riddle* is, therefore, indicative of deeply ingrained attitudes which would have strongly associated the condition of slavery and powerlessness with femininity, sexual submission, moral corruption and with a physically repellent appearance. Such perceptions were not limited to either Anglo-Saxon society or to the communities of medieval Britain and Scandinavia. Indeed, similar attitudes may be found in almost all slave holding societies and are effectively employed to dehumanise, subjugate and shame the enslaved individual. These attitudes, thereby, enable the slave master to psychologically overcome the inherent paradox of the institution of slavery which requires one individual to regard another as a possession or an object rather than as a thinking breathing human being.

The purpose of this discussion has been to establish the fundamental importance of the institution of slavery for the societies of medieval Britain prior to the twelfth century. Although these societies were, in many respects, culturally and linguistically diverse, they all occupied a very similar 'conceptual' and 'social' world which was constructed around one very important distinction. That distinction was the difference between power and weakness; honour and shame; between belonging and not belonging; between 'being' and 'not being'; *between freedom and slavery*. These were all societies in which an individual's place was defined by cultural distinctions founded upon personal power and honour and related closely to expressions of physical dominance which were expressed through normative symbols of masculinity and warrior-hood. The institution of slavery was of paramount significance for the maintenance of social order because it provided the foundation against which varying degrees of power holding and freedom could be defined. Perceptions of power and powerlessness were so central to the social order of these societies that they even shaped the way in which individuals perceived one another, in both a physical and a

²⁷⁴ Just as it is in *Rígsþula*, see Pelteret, "Image", pp. 82–83. Jochens, "Male Gaze", pp. 19–20.

²⁷⁵ Pelteret has noted that the riddle's depiction of female drunkenness is virtually unique in the corpus of Old English literature, "Image", p. 82.

psychological sense. Within these societies social order was based upon an intensely patriarchal system which defined power through a medium of winnable and losable attributes. Such definitions of power were a significant cultural legacy which had been passed down from the pre-Christian era. As a consequence secular perceptions of social order and expressions of power and gender were frequently at odds with the ideology of Christianity. Yet, such perceptions and modes of behaviour were so fundamentally significant for the functioning of these societies that churchmen found it extremely difficult to modify and alter them. It was only following the Gregorian reform movement of the eleventh century that the ecclesiastical ideals of monogamy, celibacy and primogeniture finally began to permeate into secular society and alter behavioural patterns. Furthermore, during the twelfth century the increasing acceptance of these ideals together with the introduction of chivalrous codes of behaviour in warfare were to reconfigure constructions of patriarchy within these British societies. This, in turn, would lead to a quantum shift in attitudes, which would metamorphosise traditional conceptualisations of both power and gender. In the process, the rigid distinctions of freedom and slavery, which had been so fundamental for establishing social order, would be modified and supplanted. These conceptual changes would not herald the disappearance of slavery but they would significantly reduce the social significance of the institution. In the next chapter we shall examine how these conceptual changes came about and analyse the profound effect which they were to have upon the societies of medieval Britain.

CHAPTER FOUR

SLAVERY AND SIN

In 1127 the legatine Council of Westminster issued the following canon

The concubines of priests and canons shall be expelled from the parish, unless they have contracted a lawful marriage there. If they are found afterwards offending, they shall be arrested by the officers of the church, in whatever lordship they may be; and we command, under pain of excommunication, that they not be sheltered by any jurisdiction, either inferior or superior, but truly delivered up to the officer of the church, to be subjected to ecclesiastical discipline, *or reduced to slavery*, according to the sentence of the bishop.¹

Modern historians have viewed this canonical judgement as an unremarkable expression of Gregorian reform policy.² Yet, if we regard it from the perspective of a society founded upon the values of power and virility, such as I have been describing in the preceding chapters, then we are able to glimpse its dramatic implications. When approached from this perspective, the canon provides us with evidence of a major ideological struggle that was taking place within English society during this period. This struggle was initially played out between two bitterly opposed factions within the Church itself. One was comprised of a powerful and extremely vocal group of ecclesiastical reformers who wished, amongst other things, to impose revised codes concerning marriage and sexual behaviour; integral objectives of their more ambitious

¹ (My italics) “*Concubine vero presbiterorum et canonicorum, nisi ibi legitime nupserint, extra parochiam expellantur. Quod si postea culpabiles invente fuerint, in cuiuscunque territorio invente fuerint, a ministris ecclesie capiantur. Et sub excommunicatione precipimus ne ab aliqua potestate maiore vel minore detineantur, sed libere eisdem ministris ecclesie tradantur et ecclesiastice discipline vel servituti episcopali iudicio mancipentur.*” See *Councils and Synods with other documents relating to the English Church*, D. Whitelock et al. (eds.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), vol. i, pt. ii, p. 748.

² Frank Barlow felt that this judgement represented a strengthening of existing injunctions regarding clerical celibacy and made no mention of the clause regarding the enslavement of clerical concubines in his *The English Church 1066–1154* (London: Longman, 1979), p. 129. Brett noted that this judgement facilitated the enforcement of clerical celibacy, however he failed to recognise the significance of the enslavement of clerical concubines, *The English Church under Henry I* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 150. See also Moore, *Domesday*, p. 220.

project to divide the spiritual and secular spheres of society.³ The other was made up of a body of lay priests, churchmen and bishops who adhered to a much more deeply ingrained set of values and norms associated with the normative masculine characteristics of the warrior elite set out in the preceding chapters.⁴ These struggling factions were symptomatic of wider and more fundamental socio-cultural changes occurring within English society during the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. During this period traditional social perceptions regarding personal morality and behaviour were undergoing a profound alteration. Revised norms of behaviour introduced from the continent were distinctly modifying perceptions of long standing social institutions such as warriorhood, male guardianship, concubinage and slavery. These conceptual changes are all the more significant because this is precisely the same period in which many modern academics have argued that slavery was disappearing from English society. Moreover, some historians have argued, tentatively, that there was a direct connection between the acceptance of these modified norms and the apparent disappearance of this ancient institution.⁵ If so, this, in turn, would suggest that cultural rather than economic factors played an important role in contributing toward the diminishing significance of slavery in the societies of medieval Britain. Yet, if slavery were truly disappearing in this period then why did the well-educated and enlightened individuals of the legatine council order that the concubines of priests be reduced to the condition of slavery?

The Church authorities had long been concerned about sexual morality. Indeed, ecclesiastics had been attempting to impose their codes of sexual conduct upon the secular populations of medieval Britain since the conversion period. In spite of this, pre-Christian codes of behaviour that embraced sexual licence, polygyny and slave holding/raiding remained of central importance for the maintenance of social structures and gender constructions. As a result, the Church's ideological conceptions regarding sexual conduct were frequently adapted or subsumed in

³ Moore, *Revolution*, p. 11.

⁴ For a parallel from thirteenth century Normandy see J. Thibodeaux, "Man of the Church, or Man of the Village? Gender and the Parish Clergy in Medieval Normandy", *Gender and History*, vol. 18, 2, August 2006, pp. 380–399.

⁵ See M.M. Sheehan, "Theory and Practice: Marriage of the Unfree and the Poor in Medieval Society", *Medieval Studies*, vol. i, 1988, pp. 457–487, 463, Samson, "End", pp. 108–109, also Jochens, "Illicit Love", p. 386.

order to accommodate these traditional modes of behaviour.⁶ By the middle of the eleventh century, however, reforming ideals formulated within the ascetic monastic communities of Western Europe, had begun to challenge long standing conceptions of power, gender and sexuality.⁷ During this period ecclesiastical scholars came to regard celibacy as the highest form of Christian life.⁸

...the drive to enforce sacerdotal celibacy represented more than an effort to change the marital practices of the sexually active; it was part of a larger effort to redefine the clerical order into something visibly and markedly separated from the lay world, a separation that included its removal from everything that came along with marriage and the sexually active state.⁹

The reform movement therefore held up sexual continence amongst ecclesiasts and, at the very least, monogamy amongst the secular elite as ultimate expressions of civilisation and power. Yet, these ideals were in direct opposition to the traditional avenues to power, which were expressed through overt displays of masculine virility, female accumulation and the guardianship of women.

In the following discussion, I will examine the impact that the reformers' revised norms of behaviour were having upon the traditional systems of patriarchy that I have been describing thus far. I will begin by examining how a close association between slavery, sexuality and sin had developed within the Christian belief system. A brief examination of the movement for Church reform will follow together with an analysis of the ideological and political objectives of the reformers. This in turn will be related to an examination of the way in which the reforming ideals were developed and implemented in Western European societies. I will then examine how the implementation of these ideals affected traditional expressions of power and, in particular, the social

⁶ For examples, see chapter 2.

⁷ Moore, *Revolution*, pp. 11, 86–88 J.A. McNamara, "The *Herrenfrige*: The Restructuring of the Gender System 1050–1150" in Lees (ed.), *Medieval Masculinities*, pp. 3–29, 5–8, M.C. Miller, "Masculinity, Reform, and Clerical Culture: Narratives of Episcopal Holiness in the Gregorian Era", *Church History*, 72:1, March 2003, pp. 25–52, 48–50, J.A. Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 174, Thibodeaux, "Man of the Church", p. 383, L. Wertheimer, "Children of Disorder: Clerical Parentage, Illegitimacy, and Reform in the Middle Ages", *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 15.3, September 2006, pp. 382–407.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Wertheimer, "Children of Disorder", p. 384.

perceptions of slavery. A case study will follow which examines the extent to which reforming ideals had permeated English society prior to 1066. The implications of the Norman Conquest will then be analysed in relation to the imposition of the norms of the Gregorian reform movement and the introduction of chivalric codes of behaviour from Northern France. It will be argued that the formal acceptance of these codes within the English elite was to result in a dramatic reconfiguration of traditional systems of patriarchy during the twelfth century. Indeed, this reconfiguration would transform both gender categorisations and the way in which power was defined within English society. This would also dramatically affect the Anglo-Saxon institution of slavery that was so intimately associated with the traditional expressions of normative masculine power.

Sex, Sin and Slavery

The enforcement of codes that restricted sexual conduct had been an important issue for Church authorities from the very beginning of the Christian era. Among the earliest extant Christian documents the *Letters of St. Paul* reveal a preoccupation with sexual behaviour and expound the virtues of monogamy and sexual continence.¹⁰ Yet, despite their overt concerns regarding unrestrained sexuality, the Christian fathers appear to have voiced little opposition towards slavery: an institution that was clearly founded upon violent sexual domination and exploitation.¹¹ St. Paul, himself, appears to have accepted that slavery was part of the natural order of things.¹² Furthermore, the attitude of early medieval

¹⁰ G.F. Hawthorne and R.P. Martin (eds.), *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1993), pp. 871–874.

¹¹ Brown has convincingly argued that the leaders of the early Christian Church “showed themselves as little prepared as the philosophers had been to overturn the institution of household slavery. By their hesitation on that issue, they doomed themselves from the outset to an honourable ineffectiveness on the issue of marital fidelity. Most infidelity took the form of sleeping with one’s own slaves: it was simply one assertion, among many others, of the master’s power over the bodies of his dependents.” P. Brown, *The Body and Society, Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 23. See also Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, chapters 1 and 3.

¹² In *1 Corinthians* 7:20–22 Paul comments “Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. Were you a slave when you were called? Don’t let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, make the most of it.” *DPL*, p. 882. Glancy argues that “In *1 Thessalonians* Paul urges male Christians to avoid

Church authorities towards slavery is perhaps best exemplified in a statement from the seventh-century bishop and saint, Isidore of Seville. In his *Etymologiae* Isidore commented that

Although remission of the original sin is granted to all the faithful by the grace of baptism, the just God has instituted discrimination in human life, making some slaves, others masters, so that the freedom of slaves to do wrong may be checked by the power of those who dominate. For if all were without fear, how could evil be prohibited.¹³

Isidore, therefore, recognised that the Church's position was dependent upon secular hierarchies and traditional social structures which he clearly felt should not be tampered with. He strongly associated slavery with original sin; an association derived from the theological works of the early Christian fathers, most particularly from St. Augustine of Hippo.¹⁴ In order to understand the medieval Church's acceptance of the institution of slavery then we must examine this association in more detail.

Augustine believed that an intimate connection had existed between slavery and sin ever since Adam and Eve's fall from grace.¹⁵ His interpretation of 'the fall' was to remain extremely influential for the way

porneia by obtaining their own vessels. Accustomed to relying on slaves as morally neutral sexual outlets, the Thessalonian Christians could easily have construed these words as advice to maintain the honor of respectable free born Christians by turning to slaves to satisfy their sexual inclinations. Indeed, it is strange that Paul does not explicitly condemn the sexual use of slaves if he believes this practice to be inconsistent with the Christian ethos." *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 70 for an illuminating discussion of Paul's attitudes to slavery see Glancy, pp. 34–36, 84–85, 99–100.

¹³ "Et licet peccatum humanæ originis per baptismi gratium cunctis fidelibus dimissum sit, tamen æquus Deus ideo discrevit hominibus vitam, alios servos constituens, alios dominos, ut licentia male agendi servorum potestate dominantium restringatur. Nam si omnes sine metu fuissent, quis esset qui a malis quempiam prohiberet?" *Etymologiae*, J.P. Migne (ed.), *PL*, 83 (Paris: Migne, 1850), 717. Translation from G. Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*, A. Goldhammer (trans.) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 67. Isidore's sentiments were reiterated by the influential Anglo-Saxon cleric Ælfric in his tenth-century homilies, see Girsch, "Metaphorical", p. 44.

¹⁴ Augustine was a Roman citizen born in Numidia in 354 and reared as a strict Christian. He studied Roman law in Carthage and subsequently became a professor in rhetoric in Milan. He was a prolific theological author yet by far his most influential work was his *De Civitate Dei*. This was composed during the final years of Augustine's life between 415–430, see *Saint Augustine, The City of God against the Pagans*, vol. i, G.E. McCracken (ed. and trans.) (London: Heinemann, 1957), pp. vii–lxxxiii.

¹⁵ "The prime cause of slavery, then, is sin, so that man was put under man in a state of bondage", "*Prima ergo servitutis causa peccatum est, ut homo homini condicionis vinculo subderetur*", *DCD*, W.C. Greene (ed. and trans.) (London: Heinemann, 1960), vol. vi, book xix, xv, pp. 188–189.

in which ecclesiastical intellectuals perceived and ordered the world throughout the medieval period. Most medieval theologians believed that the sin of lechery had not existed in God's ordered world prior to the fall of Adam and Eve.¹⁶ They, therefore, felt that sexual sin could not have been instrumental in the couple's fall from grace.¹⁷ They did, however, acknowledge that the couple had committed two capital sins when they had tasted the forbidden fruit. These had been the sins of pride and disobedience. As a consequence of their actions it was thought that Adam and Eve had disrupted God's natural order and introduced sin into the world. This perversion of order had occurred primarily because man had refused to obey his legitimate superior. As a result, Adam, Eve and the entire human race had been cast into perpetual spiritual slavery. This interpretation of the fall is evident in St. Augustine's fifth-century text *De Civitate Dei*.

But by nature, in which God first created man, no man is the slave either of another man or of sin. Yet slavery as a punishment is also ordained by that law which bids us to preserve the natural order and forbids us to disturb it; for if nothing had been done contrary to that law, there would have been nothing requiring the check of punishment by slavery...¹⁸

Interestingly, Augustine felt that the immediate manifestation of this spiritual slavery was an awareness of sexual shame. Indeed, he was quite explicit concerning this point commenting that

...after God's command had been disobeyed, the first human beings, as divine favour departed them, straightway became ashamed of the nakedness of their bodies. Hence too they used fig leaves, which perhaps were the first things they hit upon in their embarrassment to cover their *pudenda*, that is, shameful members. These had been the same organs before, but had not then been shameful. Thus they experienced an unprecedented movement in their own disobedient flesh as punishment in kind, as it were, for their own disobedience.¹⁹

¹⁶ P.J. Payer, *The Bridling of Desire: Views of Sex in the Later Middle Ages* (Toronto/Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1993), pp. 42–43.

¹⁷ Ibid. See also Cooper and Leyser, "Gender", p. 12.

¹⁸ "*Nullus autem natura, in qua prius Deus hominem condidit, servus est hominis aut peccati. Verum et poenalis servitus ea lege ordinatur quae naturalem ordinem conservari iubet, perturbari velat, quia si contra eam legem non esset factum, nihil esset poenali servitute coercendum.*" DCD, vol. vi, book xix, xv, pp. 188–189.

¹⁹ "*Nam postea quam praecepti facta transgressio est, confestim, gratia deserente divina, de corporum suorum nuditate confusi sunt. Unde etiam foliis ficulneis, quae forte a perturbatis prima comperta sunt, pudenda texerunt, quae prius eadem membra erant, sed pudenda non erant. Senserunt ergo novum*

According to St. Augustine, then, slavery, sin and sexual corruption were simultaneously brought forth into the world as a result of Adam and Eve's fall from grace. Mankind's sin was manifested not in the sexual act *per se* but in the individual's lack of psychological control over his or her sexual organs. Augustine believed that prior to the fall the act of sexual intercourse had been both shameless and exquisite.²⁰ It was Adam and Eve's sin of pride that had corrupted God's innocent and rational order and condemned mankind to a debilitating and servile disorder associated with uncontrollable and base physical desires. This influential interpretation of the fall was to result in a pervasive and persistent association in the medieval psyche which equated original sin with sexual corruption and slavery.²¹ This association is clearly evident in the works of later medieval writers, for example the twelfth-century English writer John of Salisbury felt that

...vices only bring about slavery, and they subject men to persons and things in undue slavery, and although slavery to people sometimes appears more pitiable, slavery to vices is always far more miserable.²²

In the theological terms of Augustine, then, sexual intercourse was to be regarded as an agent that transmitted original sin and spiritual slavery down through the generations.²³ Moreover, a clear loss of bodily control associated closely with dishonour, shame and diminution of status was implicit within his interpretation of the fall. It is not difficult to imagine how the traditionally hereditary condition of slavery, with its pejorative

motum inoboedientis carnis suae, tamquam reciprocam poenam inoboedientiae suae." DCD, vol. iv, book xiii, P. Levine (ed. and trans.) (London: Heinemann, 1966), pp. 178–179.

²⁰ Cooper and Leyser, "Gender", p. 12. Augustine's personal background may well have affected his attitudes on this subject. Indeed, although he expounded the ascetic ideal in later life, during his youth Augustine had maintained a concubine by whom he had fathered a son named Adeodatus, see P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo, A Biography* (London: Faber, 1967), pp. 62–63.

²¹ See also Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, particularly chapter 1.

²² "...e contra uitia sola seruitutem inducunt hominemque personis et rebus indebito famulatu subiciunt; et, licet seruitus personae quandoque miserabilior pareat, uitiorum seruitus longe semper miserior est." To illustrate this point John uses the example of the wives of the Teutons who preferred to commit suicide rather than face the violent ravages of their marauders lest "they might become enslaved or be subject to loss of chastity", "*proxima nocte laqueis sibi spiritum eripuerunt eliso gutture ne seruierent aut pudicitiae dispendium paterentur.*" *Poli.* (Webb), lib. vii, cp. xxv, pp. 218–219, translation modified from Nederman, *Poli.*, p. 176. See also, P. Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 206–219 and Payer, *Bridling*, pp. 42–46.

²³ Garnsey, *Ideas*, pp. 206–219, Payer, *Bridling*, pp. 42–46.

connotations of sexual accessibility and penetration, could have been accommodated within this conceptual framework. What is, perhaps, more difficult to understand is how it was possible for these conceptions to be related to the egalitarian message of salvation, forgiveness and compassion that had been expounded by Christ.

In a much cited letter to the Galatians, St. Paul appears to have reminded his audience of the liberating effects of their newly adopted faith:

For when all of you were baptized into Christ, you put Christ on as though he were your clothing. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is no male and female; for all of you are One in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then as a result of that, you are the seed of Abraham, heirs in accordance with the promise.²⁴

Paul's key concern in this extract was not to address the bonds of servitude but rather to set aside the ethnic differences of Jews and Greeks.²⁵ Nevertheless, his accompanying pronouncements apparently also invalidated both the social categories of slave and free and gender categories of male and female. Yet, in spite of this, Paul still tacitly acknowledged the legal/cultural differences between the slave and the free and, in addition, highlighted the gendered nature of this differentiation within his instructions.²⁶ In Galatians 4 he goes on to clarify the situation.

What I mean can be made yet clearer by a picture: So long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, even though in prospect, he is lord of the entire household. He is under the authority of guardians and managers until the arrival of the time set by the father for his passage to the status of an adult. So it was with us: during our minority we were slaves, subject to the elemental spirits of the universe, but when the appointed time came, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under

²⁴ "*quicumque enim in Christo baptizati estis Christum induistis, non est Iudaeus neque Graecus, non est servus neque liber, non est masculus neque femina, omnes enim vos unum estis in Christo Iesu. Si autem vos Christi ergo Abrahae semen estis secundum promissionem heredes.*" Gal. 3:27–29, Latin version from *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem / recensuit et brevi apparatu instruxit Robertus Weber* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1985) vol. ii, p. 1805, English translation from Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 34.

²⁵ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 34.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

law, to buy freedom for those who were under the law, in order that we might attain the status of sons.²⁷

In this letter Paul was clearly discussing spiritual rather than actual slavery. Nonetheless, his metaphorical imagery was clearly informed by the harsh realities of late Roman society. Unsurprisingly, Paul's conceptual framework was shaped and moulded by his own social and cultural milieu; he was very much the product of a slave-holding world. The significance of his statements regarding the emancipating and redemptive effects of Christianity can only be properly understood within the framework of that slave-holding world. Indeed, Glancy has insightfully remarked that Paul's metaphors only really make sense within the context of first-century society. In his comparison of the position of the underage heir with the slave Paul was clearly reinforcing contemporary perceptions that equated slaves with the status of children. His contrast between the son/heir and the slave emphasized the exclusion of slaves from systems of paternity/filiation thus underlining the slave's conceptual inability to progress into adult manhood. Glancy has therefore observed that

....the apparent erasure of division between slave and free that Paul proclaims in 3:28 is only a cover-up, as Paul goes onto reinscribe customary and legal distinctions between slave and free. These distinctions are gender laden.²⁸

Paul's rhetorical remarks concerning a promised end to the divisions between slave and free were expressed using terms which acknowledged and accepted a very different reality; a reality in which slavery was an institution that underpinned the cultural and social norms of society.

In order to address the ideological contradictions which arose from the existence and significance of slavery, medieval Christian theologians refined and developed Augustine's associations between slavery and sin, making sin crucial to the interpretation of Christ's resurrection. Thus,

²⁷ "*dico autem quanto tempore heres parvulus est nihil differt servo cum sit dominus omnium sed sub tutoribus est et actoribus usque ad praefinitum tempus a patre. Ita et nos: cum essemus parvuli sub elementis mundi eramus servientes at ubi venit plenitudo temporis misit Deus Filium suum factum ex muliere factum sub lege ut eos qui sub lege erant redimeret ut adoptionem filiorum reciperemus.*" Gal 4:1-5, *Vulgata* vol. ii, p. 1805, see also Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, pp. 34-35.

²⁸ "In contrasting the experiences of the slave and the heir, Paul assumes the exclusion of slaves from an important dimension of masculinity: the experience of being acknowledged as a father or a son." Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 35, see also pp. 70, 84-85, 99-101.

two quite different interpretations of the resurrection came to be held. One contended that through Christ's death all human sinners also died and were reborn as Christ's slaves.²⁹ The other: that Christ's death effectively manumitted mankind and freed it from spiritual slavery.³⁰ Yet, this second strand of thought was potentially explosive for the social order on which the Church relied for its survival.³¹ If all individuals were truly equal and slavery violated the divine codes of equality and brotherhood, then, by the same token, so did social hierarchies, patriarchal systems, kinship groupings and family structures.³² Thus the former view came to be dominant as it harnessed the dangerously liberating ethos of the Christian doctrine by associating slavery with both original sin and sexual corruption. This association allowed the Church to balance the Christian ethos with its continuing support for the social structure and, therefore, maintain a position of duality.

The early Church's ambivalent attitude towards slavery and its association between that condition and sexual sin are clearly evident in a story from the *Acts of Andrew* which dates to the second or early third century.³³ This relates how Maximilla, a Christian noblewoman, wished to avoid the spiritual pollution of sexual relations with her husband, Aegeates, a non-Christian proconsul. In order to achieve this end Maximilla sent a shapely slave girl named Eucilia to sleep with Aegeates in her stead. Thus "by so doing Maximilla escaped detection for some time, and thereby got relief, rejoiced in the Lord, and never left Andrew (Christ's apostle)."³⁴ However, Eucilia subsequently began to boast about her favoured position and also blackmailed Maximilla, first for her freedom and then for money and jewellery.³⁵ The other slaves of the household, bitter about Eucilia's rise to favour, soon informed their master of the trick that had been played upon him. Yet, the enraged Aegentes vented his anger, not upon his duplicitous wife, but rather upon his presumptuous slave girl.

²⁹ Patterson, *Social Death*, pp. 71–72.

³⁰ Glancy has highlighted how both of these interpretations are evident in the writings of St. Paul, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 99. See also Patterson, *Social Death*, pp. 71–2.

³¹ Davis, *Problem*, p. 92.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 92.

³³ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 22.

³⁴ *Acts of Andrew 17, The Apocryphal New Testament*, J.K. Elliott (ed. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 250.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 18, p. 251.

The proconsul, furious at her for boasting to her fellow slaves and for saying these things in order to defame her mistress—he wanted the matter hushed up since he was still affectionate for his spouse—cut out Eucilia's tongue, mutilated her, and ordered her thrown outside. She stayed there without food for several days before she became food for the dogs. The rest of the slaves who had told their story to him—there were three of them—he crucified.³⁶

Thus, the *Acts of Andrew* sanctioned the sexual use of slaves provided it was instrumental in preserving the spiritual integrity of an elite Christian female.³⁷ On the other hand, the author clearly condemned the actions of the lascivious and greedy slave girl who developed ideas abover her station (not to mention the gossiping slaves who subsequently ratted on her). Indeed, the brutal treatment meted out to both is portrayed as both justified and reasonable. Moreover, the text highlights a set of sexual ethics in which "...abstinence from polluting sexual activity is a distinctly elite prerogative. This latter ethical system served not only upper-class interests but also explicitly Christian interests."³⁸

A number of similarly pejorative stories about slave women are evident within certain early medieval British hagiographical texts.³⁹ On the one hand, these tracts mirror secular attitudes, similar to those extant in *Rígspula*, which associated slaves (and particularly female slaves) with treachery, corruption, immorality, sexual accessibility and perversion.⁴⁰ For example, in Ælfric's Old English version of the *Life of Eugenia* the saint disguised herself as a man in order that she could enter a monastery and maintain her chastity. Yet, whilst she was in this disguise Eugenia was accused of having attempted to seduce an evil noble woman named Melantia.⁴¹ Eugenia, who was, of course, innocent

³⁶ Ibid., 22, p. 251, I have used Glancy's slightly modified translation here, see *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 22.

³⁷ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 22.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Schulenberg has argued that hagiographical writings provide us with a great deal of information about contemporary attitudes, values and moral concerns regarding sexual behaviour, see J.T. Schulenberg, "Saints and Sex ca. 500–1100: Striding down the Nettle Path of Life" in Salisbury, *Sex in the Middle Ages*, pp. 203–232, 203–204.

⁴⁰ Goodich, "Ancilla Dei", p. 120.

⁴¹ Ælfric wrote his *Life of Eugenia* at the end of the tenth century. The translation used here is taken from a version found in a manuscript which was copied down within fifty years of his composition. The original Greek version of the *Life of Eugenia* dates from around the fifth century, yet, her story appears to have retained its appeal within the later Anglo-Saxon monastic communities. Ælfric was not merely a redactor of the original version, he deliberately adapted earlier hagiographical material to suit the

of these charges called upon a female slave who had witnessed her perfectly innocent encounter with Melantia to testify on her behalf. Yet, the slave betrayed her and lied under oath stating that Eugenia set out to engage in adultery in order to shame her lady.⁴² This slave also called upon the male slaves of the household to support her argument and under oath they, too, all lied about Eugenia.⁴³ This female slave committed no sexual crime herself yet the author clearly associated her servile status with treachery and sexual corruption. Furthermore, the Welsh *Vita Davidus* provides us with another example revealing medieval ecclesiastical assumptions concerning the immoral character and lascivious nature of female slaves.⁴⁴ The *Vita* relates that the wife of a pagan chieftain who was an enemy of St. David sent a group of her slave girls to a river where his monks collected water and ordered them to "...go where the masters can see you, and with bodies bare, play games and use lewd words."⁴⁵ The author then comments that

The maids obey, they play immodest games, imitating sexual intercourse and displaying love's seductive embraces. The minds of some of the monks they entice away to lust, the minds of others they disturb.⁴⁶

St. David's men wished to flee from this despicable display but the Saint reassured them and reaffirmed their chastity so that they were able to withstand the lewd advances of these corrupting *ancillæ*.⁴⁷

In many Christian sources, then, the rhetoric of slavery is associated with sin, disobedience, treachery and lasciviousness. Yet, paradoxically, slavery also came to be employed as a metaphor for the relationship of

tastes and sensibilities of his own age. Indeed, the portrayal of the immoral nature of Melantia's slave is strongly comparable with the attitudes towards female slaves extant in the *Anglo-Saxon Riddles*, see chapter 3, see also *Women's Saint's Lives in Old English Prose*, L.A. Donovan (ed. and trans.) (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), pp. 17–18, 67–77.

⁴² Ibid., p. 72.

⁴³ Ibid. Eugenia was subsequently cleared of these charges after she exposed her body to reveal that she was a woman.

⁴⁴ The *Vita* was composed by Rhigyfarch, bishop of St. Davids in the final decades of the eleventh century, *The Life of St. David*, J.W. James (ed. and trans.) (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1967), p. xi. See also R. Bartlett, "Cults of Irish, Scottish and Welsh Saints in Twelfth Century England" in B. Smith (ed.), *Britain and Ireland 900–1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 67–86, 78.

⁴⁵ "*Ite et nudatis corporibus ante collegii presentiam ludicra exercentes, impudicis utimini uerbis*" ibid., pp. 10–11, 35.

⁴⁶ "*Ancille obediunt, impudicos exercent ludos, concubitus simulant, blandos amoris nexus ostendunt: monachorum mentes quorundam ad libidines pertrahunt, quorundam molestant.*" Ibid., pp. 10, 35.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

the Christian subject to God.⁴⁸ In metaphorical constructions, slavery was used to denote very positive spiritual characteristics such as faithfulness, gratitude, unquestioning obedience, humility and abasement before the Lord. This type of metaphorical usage dated back to the Old Testament, indeed Moses, Josue and David are amongst those described as 'slaves of the Lord'.⁴⁹ Similarly, in the gospels of the New Testament, Jesus is attributed with evoking the imagery of the slave-lord relationship on a number of significant occasions. In the *Acts of Thomas* the 'slave of Christ' metaphor is expanded into a detailed narrative. This relates how Judas Thomas disobeyed Christ's wish that the apostle should travel to India as a missionary.⁵⁰ Following Judas Thomas' refusal, Jesus subsequently approached a merchant named Abban, the steward of an Indian king, who was buying slave craftsmen to transport back to India. Jesus told the merchant that he wished to sell his slave carpenter (Judas Thomas) and wrote out a bill of sale stating:

I Jesus, the son of the carpenter Joseph, declare that I have sold my slave, Judas by name, to you Abban, a merchant of Gundaphorus, king of the Indians.⁵¹

Jesus then pointed out Judas Thomas to Abban who questioned the apostle as to whether Jesus was his master. Judas Thomas, of course, confirmed that this was so and Abban informed him that he had been purchased. Judas Thomas accepted Jesus' will and did not resist his enslavement. However, before Abban and his new slave departed for India Jesus returned and handed Judas Thomas the money to buy his redemption instructing him to always carry with him the price that Jesus had paid for him (i.e. through Jesus' death on the Cross). This story clearly continued to have resonant for medieval writers and their audiences, indeed, the tenth-century Anglo-Saxon ecclesiast

⁴⁸ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 10. Cooper and Leyser have argued "...it is the austere power of the *patronus*, with its implicit threat of violence, which best serves to delineate the Deity's ultimately benevolent, yet awesome and inescapable authority, while the cowering uncertainty of the *servus* embodies the Christian's essential condition." Cooper and Leyser, "Gender", p. 7.

⁴⁹ H. Magennis, "Godes Beow and Related Expressions in Old English: Contexts and Uses of a Traditional Literary Figure", *Anglia: Zeitschrift für englische Philologie*, 116:2, 1998, pp. 139–170, 141.

⁵⁰ *The Acts of Thomas*, 1–3, *Apocryphal New Testament*, pp. 447–448. The Acts of Thomas were probably composed in the early third century, see Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, p. 96.

⁵¹ *The Acts of Thomas*, 2, p. 448.

Ælfric translated it into the English vernacular rendering the encounter between Abban and Judas Thomas in the following manner:

Then Abban asked the venerable apostle: “Tell me, in truth, if thou be His slave?” Thomas answered him, “If I were not His property, I should very soon neglect His hests; but I am His slave, and do not the things which I myself choose, but that which my Lord tells me; I am one of the countless number of his slaves, and we all know (various) crafts in his works, and go throughout the provinces, and without fraud bring back to our Lord that which we can earn.”⁵²

Terms such as *servus dei* and *ancilla dei* litter the medieval Christian Latin literature of Western Europe. This perhaps best exemplified by the title *Servus servorum Dei* (literally slave of the slaves of God) which came to be attached to all papal letters and priveleges.⁵³ Bede and other Anglo-Latin writers consistently applied phrases like ‘slave of God’ and ‘slave of Christ’ to leading religious figures.⁵⁴ As the above example from Ælfric reveals, Anglo-Saxon ecclesiasts readily adopted and translated such imagery and terminology into their vernacular tongue. Both Girsch and Magennis have discussed the employment of equivalent terms such as *Godes þeow(a)* and *Cristes þeow(a)* within the corpus of the Old English texts in illuminating detail.⁵⁵ Clearly such terms cannot be taken literally as their referents were well born, well regarded, autonomous and often powerful individuals.⁵⁶ More significantly, they were exemplars of religious observance and spiritual purity thus clearly undercutting the literal meaning and conceptual associations of terms such as *servus* or *þeow*. The saints and holy men referred to in this manner were often portrayed as vigorous and aggressive in defense of the faith yet, they were meek and compliant in the eyes of God. Moreover, Girsch argues that in the Anglo-Saxon context, the positive connotations associated with this metaphorical employment of slave-terms were eroding the

⁵² “*ƿa axode abbanes þone arwurðan apostol. Sege me to soþan gif þu sy his þeowa. Thomas him andwyrde. Gif ic his eht nære ic wolde forseon sona his hæsa. ac ic eom his þeowa. and þa þing ne do þe ic sylf geceose. ac þæt me sægð min hlaforð. Ic eom an his þeowena of þam ungerimum. and we ealle cunnon crafstas on weorcum. and farað geond scira and butan swic-dome bringað eft urum hlaforde þæt we ge-earniað.*” lines 51–60 quoted with a translation in Magennis, “Godes”, p. 160.

⁵³ A.J. Duggan, “*Servus servorum Dei*” in B. Bolton and A.J. Duggan (eds.) *Adrian IV The English Pope (1154–1159)* (Aldershot and Burlington U.S.A.: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 181–210, 197.

⁵⁴ Magennis, “Godes”, p. 147.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 148–170, Girsch, “Metaphorical”, pp. 30–54.

⁵⁶ Girsch, “Metaphorical”, p. 40.

pejorative stigma associated with both slave terminology and the institution itself.⁵⁷ However, such positive metaphorical imagery was not exclusive to the Anglo-Saxon context; it had been employed from the earliest Christian times; the entire Christian discourse was permeated with the rhetoric of slavery.⁵⁸ Yet, this appears to have had very little impact upon perceptions of either individual slaves or upon slavery as an institution. Indeed, such metaphorical imagery may well have helped to reinforce the institution.⁵⁹ Magennis regards Girsch's contention concerning the ameliorating effect of the positive metaphorical language employed by Old English writers with some scepticism. He highlights that the Old English Church had no ideological opposition to slavery and indeed endorsed the institution through its prolific slaveholding thus rendering the *þeow* metaphor perfectly normal and acceptable.⁶⁰

The parallel metaphorical image of the *ancilla dei* or 'slave-woman of God' stemmed originally from the scriptural depiction of Mary referring to herself with this epithet.⁶¹ Yet, later medieval writers like Ælfric, who clearly understood the stigma of sexual availability associated with the female slave, regarded the employment of this label with some uncertainty in relation to the mother of Christ.⁶² Although terms such as *ancilla dei*/*þeowen godes* were quite frequently used to refer to high status religious women, the context of their metaphorical employment

⁵⁷ Girsch argues that this metaphorical usage of *þeow* "undermined the term's ability to evoke the characteristic features of the slave" and that this ameliorating terminology affected the rest of the system, *ibid.*, p. 43 "Ordinary people would have heard these same propositions preached in sermons... and if the notion of slavery was based on their own experience and observation, it is still perhaps true that they might have absorbed something of this paradoxical construct, this reversal of ordinary notions of slavery and freedom", p. 44.

⁵⁸ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, pp. 10, 35, see also pp. 70, 84–85, 99–101.

⁵⁹ Glancy has argued convincingly that the early Christian authors employ "...conventions and clichés that construct an image of the slave body as vulnerable to invasion and abuse, reinforcing a range of other evidence from the early Empire. Ironically, even as Christian sources downplay the impact of the brutal physical realities of ancient slavery, they rely on corporal metaphors of slavery to depict spiritual identity." *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶⁰ "...even with the metaphor's logical implication of God as a slave-owner." Magennis, "Godes", p. 157.

⁶¹ "...*ecce ancilla Domini*", *Luke I. 38: Vulgam* vol. ii, p. 1607.

⁶² Both Ælfric and the author of the Old English *Blickling Homilies* expressed wonder at Mary's humility in using such a term, see Magennis, "Godes", p. 166.

often highlighted the referents sexuality and sexual vulnerability in a way that *servus dei/godes þeow* rarely, if ever, did.⁶³

Generally, *Ancillae dei* was used to denote saintly or cloistered women who were renowned for their humility and piety but, first and foremost, for their chastity.⁶⁴ Some *ancilla dei* were intimately associated with the institution of slavery or had themselves suffered under the yoke of servitude and/or sexual oppression. One such character was St Brigit of Ireland whose life is portrayed in the eighth-century *Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae*.⁶⁵ Brigit was the product of a union between a nobleman, named Dubthach, and his slave woman, Broisech. The *Vita* makes it clear that as a young girl Brigit was considered to be a slave because her father attempted to sell her to his king.⁶⁶ This transaction would have clearly placed the saint in a sexually accessible position and she vehemently resisted by impertinently voicing her commitment to God. The king, subsequently, refused to purchase the girl stating “This daughter of yours, Dubthach, it seems to me is a great responsibility for me to buy and a greater one for you to sell.”⁶⁷ Shortly after this a man came to Dubthach and asked to marry Brigit. The saint, however, wished to retain her chastity and refused his advances.⁶⁸ Despite this, Brigit’s male guardian ordered that the marriage should take place. The saint’s lowly status prevented her from resisting these wishes and so she resorted to a drastic supernatural solution in order to alleviate her plight.

Brigit asked God to afflict her body with some deformity in order that men might stop paying suit to her. Thereupon one of her eyes burst and liquefied in her head. For she preferred to lose her bodily eye than the eye of her soul and loved beauty of the soul more than that of the

⁶³ Girsch, “Metaphorical”, pp. 46–47, Magennis, “Godes”, pp. 166–169. Magennis highlights how Ælfric’s sensitivity towards employing *þeow*-words in relation to holy women undermines Girsch’s conclusions regarding the displacement of *þeow* from the Old English lexicon as a result of the term’s positive metaphorical usage.

⁶⁴ Goodich, “*Ancilla*”, pp. 125–128, Schulenburg, “Saints and Sex”, pp. 204, 215. For an example see the Old English *Life of St. Agatha* in *Women’s Saint’s Lives*, pp. 38–43.

⁶⁵ *VPSB*, pp. 5–50.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, cp. 18, pp. 17–18.

⁶⁷ “*Ista filia (ut video Dubthace) maior est ad emendum mihi & maior est ad vendendum tibi.*” *TT*, p. 528, translation from Connolly, *VPSB*, cp. 18, pp. 17–18.

⁶⁸ The man was of honourable birth and, therefore, this union may have emancipated Brigit from her servile condition. However, she appears to have valued her chastity more highly than freedom from her father’s service, *ibid.*, cp. 19, p. 18.

body... When her father saw this he allowed her to take the veil and her eye was restored and she was healed on taking the veil...⁶⁹

This tract highlights several interesting points. It reveals that, for the Irish author of the *Vita*, Brigit provided an unrivalled model of sexual purity and chastity. This was because in spite of her lowly position, tainted as it was with sexual accessibility, Brigit managed to resist the sexual advances of men and avoid moral corruption. This resistance provided her with strength and autonomy; following the failure of the marriage suit Brigit became a nun and was manumitted from the control of her father.⁷⁰ Furthermore, despite her servile condition Brigit's piety and chastity shone through and provided her with a physical beauty not normally associated with slave women. Following her manumission the author consistently associated Brigit with the plight of those individuals at the bottom of society's rung. She symbolically obtained her mother's freedom and then went on to secure manumission for numerous other slaves.⁷¹ In addition, the author associated Brigit with traditionally servile tasks such as cooking, milking, herding, bathing and washing.⁷² She was also depicted as being directly involved in the prevention of events that might have facilitated slaving activity such as famines, internecine strife and the ravages of the warrior fraternity.⁷³ Yet, in spite of Brigit's good deeds, we should not regard her *Vita* as an anti-slavery tract. Brigit in no way campaigned against slavery she merely sought to alleviate the

⁶⁹ "...rogavit dominum ut aliquam deformitatem supra corpus suum daret, & cessarent eam homines querere. Tunc vnus oculus eius crepuit, & liquefactus est in capite suo. Illa autem magis elegit oculum perdere corporalem, quam animae; & plus amauit pulchritudinem animae quam corporis; Hoc autē videns pater eius, permisit eam velatam esse; & oculo restituto sanata est accepto velamine." *TT*, pp. 528–529 translation from Connolly, *VPSB*, cp. 19, p. 18. According to the thirteenth-century historian Roger of Wendover, the abbess and nuns of Coldingham in Northumbria had employed a similar tactic when they were faced with an imminent Viking attack. The abbess is said to have amputated the lips and noses of her nuns with a razor in an attempt to disgust the marauders and, thereby, maintain their chastity presumably in the face of rape and enslavement. Roger of Wendover, *Flowers of History: Comprising the History of England from the Descent of the Saxons to A.D. 1235*, J.A. Giles (ed. and trans.) (London: Bohn, 1849), vol. i, pp. 191–192. See also J.T. Schulenberg, "The Heroics of Virginité: Brides of Christ and Sacrificial Mutilation" in M.B. Rose (ed.), *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1986), pp. 29–72, 47–48.

⁷⁰ *VPSB*, caps. 19–20, p. 18.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, caps. 17, 74, 75, 88, 125, pp. 17, 36, 40, 47–48.

⁷² *Ibid.*, caps. 17, 42, 46, 82, 92, 126, pp. 17, 24, 25, 38, 42, 48.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, she fights famine in cp. 57, p. 29, pacifies an internecine struggle cp. 64, p. 31 and restrains the ravages of warrior fraternities in cps. 65, 67 and 87, pp. 323, 33, 39–40.

plight of certain oppressed individuals. The *Vita Prima Sanctae Brigitae* is, perhaps, best regarded as a text which sought to preserve the status quo within early Irish society whilst attempting to modify particularly un-Christian conduct. The author may well have been attempting to instil a sense of religious loyalty and offer some spiritual encouragement to those who had little or no power over their lives. Yet, his primary objective was to disseminate his Christian norms into the free population and encourage abstinence from excessively violent or overtly sexual behaviour. Moreover, the author of the *Vita* appears to have recognised that these Christian norms were directly contradicted by the violence and sexual exploitation inherent in the master/slave relationship.⁷⁴ Concerns regarding the moral corruption that flowed from this unequal social relationship were not confined to Irish hagiographical texts. In the Old English *Life of Saint Margaret* (of Antioch) the heroine's rejection of sexual intercourse in the face of a violent master was the sole justification needed to qualify Margaret for sainthood.⁷⁵

Despite such concerns the Church authorities seem to have, generally, accepted that slavery was an essential part of the fabric of society.⁷⁶ As we have seen, the existence of the condition of slavery provided an important social metaphor that served to reinforce humanity's servile relationship with God.⁷⁷ The Church needed to maintain society's hierarchical infrastructure in order to function. Slavery was the foundation upon which that infrastructure was built and was considered by many ecclesiasts to be "a disciplining force restraining subterranean currents of evil and rebellion".⁷⁸ Slavery was viewed as part of the natural order of things; indeed, it had been in existence since the fall

⁷⁴ For example, in chapter 74 Brigit punished a vicious female mistress who was violently abusing her bond woman, *ibid.*, p. 36. The author's concerns regarding sexual conduct are emphasised by Brigit's consistent attempts to prevent illicit sexual relationships to the extent that she was willing to perform a 'spiritual' abortion upon a novice who had become pregnant through fornication, *ibid.*, cap. 103, p. 45, see caps. 39, 97, 117, pp. 23, 44, 46–47. For a further example of the same saint restraining sexual behaviour see p. 266 below.

⁷⁵ *The Old English Lives of St. Margaret*, M. Clayton and H. Magennis (eds. and trans.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 153–171.

⁷⁶ See above.

⁷⁷ "Relations between masters and slaves, bishops and their attendants were not simply an echo of the relation between God and humanity: rather, they served as instruments through which that relation was embodied." Cooper and Leyser, "Gender", p. 16.

⁷⁸ Davis, *Problem*, p. 88.

of Adam and Eve. Yet, in spite of this, slavery was also an institution that was founded upon pre-Christian values of masculine violence and sexual exploitation and this clearly presented the Church's authorities with certain problems. How could they maintain their support for social order without simultaneously condoning the sexual excesses that were inherent within the institution of slavery? It is these conflicting concerns that we see played out in the ambivalent portrayals of slave characters within the hagiographical material cited above. Indeed, these concerns, which were never truly resolved, were to be felt most keenly by ecclesiastical reformers during the eleventh and twelfth centuries as they attempted to impose their revised codes of sexual behaviour upon an unreceptive society.

Reform Ideals vs. Warrior Norms

As already noted, the Christian authorities had long wished to secure control over the sexual behaviour of secular society. Yet, for many centuries the Christian Fathers' stern admonishments against lechery, sexual violence, concubinage and fornication appear to have gone largely unheeded within the secular elites of Western Europe. For example, Gregory of Tours reveals that, despite vehement condemnations from ecclesiastical authorities, the seventh-century Merovingian kings of France maintained plural wives and a prolific number of concubines.⁷⁹ Similarly, the pious Carolingian kings were said to have practised concubinage and serial monogamy during the eighth century.⁸⁰ Moreover, although the Norwegian monarchy was Christianised during the height of the eleventh-century reform period, Norwegian kings failed to relinquish polygyny and concubinage until well into the thirteenth century.⁸¹ We have already seen that female abduction, accumulation and concubinage remained prevalent within the Christianised societies of medieval Britain into the twelfth century. So why had the Church failed to impose behavioural codes which appear to have been so fundamental to the Christian doctrine from the outset?

⁷⁹ Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, 2 vols., see also Jochens, "Politics", p. 329.

⁸⁰ Jochens, "Politics", p. 330.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 332–349.

There can be little doubt that Christianity was the most powerful and dynamic ideological force in Europe during the medieval period. Yet, the Church's failure to enforce its behavioural norms concerning marriage and sexual conduct can be taken as a measure of the continuing social significance of pre-Christian conceptions of gender and power. In many areas of Europe the Church relied heavily upon the support of secular monarchs or chieftains in order to establish and maintain its position within society. Yet, these secular leaders were often unable or unwilling to relinquish their traditional expressions of power and masculinity. The ecclesiastical authorities' failure to impose their behavioural norms upon those individuals at the top of the hierarchical ladder severely impaired their ability to disseminate these norms into society more generally. Indeed, without the overt support of these secular rulers the Church lacked any formal and implementable system with which to combat traditional codes of behaviour.⁸² For many centuries, then, the Church authorities attempted to promote their ideals regarding sexual continence and monogamy through informal methods and 'peer pressure'.⁸³ Using penitential codes, sermons, admonitions, hagiographical tales and personal influence the ecclesiastical elite struggled to instil a sense of conscience and sexual shame into the secular psyche throughout the early medieval period.⁸⁴ During the ninth century a Frankish bishop, named Jonas of Orleans, composed a treatise designed to instruct Christian laymen in how they should conduct their personal lives.⁸⁵ Jonas not only condemned polygyny and fornication, he also admonished individuals who sought gratification from sexual intercourse within wedlock. He believed that sex for pleasure was an aberration of God's order. Following the teachings of St. Augustine, Jonas felt that sex should only be permissible to married couples and only for the purpose of procreation.⁸⁶ Significantly, Jonas argued that excessive sexual intercourse could rob a warrior of

⁸² J.A. Brundage, "Playing by the Rules: Sexual Behaviour and Legal Norms in Medieval Europe" in K. Eisenbichler and J. Murray (eds.), *Desire and Discipline: Sex and Sexuality in the Premodern West* (Toronto/Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 23–43, 25.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Jonas of Orleans, *De Institutione Laicali*, PL, 106, J.P. Migne (ed.) (Paris, 1851), 122–278. See also Brundage, *LSCS*, p. 139.

⁸⁶ *De Institutione Laicali*, pp. 184–185.

his physical strength and make him both anxious and soft.⁸⁷ This view represented a dramatic modification of traditional Germanic norms that associated virility and sexual dominance with physical strength and social power. For Jonas it was sexual restraint and chastity, rather than potency and prowess, which provided the true avenues to power, vigour and spiritual purity.⁸⁸

Ecclesiastical attitudes such as Jonas' were not uncommon in the early medieval West.⁸⁹ Such attitudes were representative of an inherent tension that existed between the pre-existing pre-Christian value systems and the behavioural codes aspired to by the ecclesiastical elite. Yet, it appears that the ecclesiastical authorities were largely unsuccessful in their attempt to modify secular perceptions which related physical and social power with masculine virility. In addition, the authorities do not appear to have made any truly concerted effort to enforce codes of chastity even within the Church prior to the eleventh century. This raises questions concerning the extent to which elements within the Church had accommodated or adopted pre-Christian codes of behaviour from Christianity's host cultures. Indeed, rather than focussing upon the secular acceptance of ecclesiastical ideals, it might be more fruitful to examine how far traditional social values had modified behavioural norms within the Church. When one examines the early Irish penitentials then one is struck by the extreme lenience that was shown toward certain sexual offences which St. Augustine would have undoubtedly considered to be serious crimes.⁹⁰ This lenience would appear to be indicative of the Irish ecclesiastical willingness to recognise and accommodate traditional behavioural codes whilst attempting to gently modify them. In addition, high-ranking Church officials in both Anglo-Saxon England and Ireland appear to have expressed their power through the

⁸⁷ Ibid., 172–174, Brundage, *LSCS*, pp. 139–140. Attitudes such as this are also evident within the ancient societies of Greece and Rome. However, these societies regarded sexual moderation and control over sexual urges to be far more beneficial than complete sexual abstinence, see Cooper and Leyser "Gender", pp. 9, 14–15. Attitudes like Jonas's were still prevalent in the twelfth century, see John of Salisbury's *Poli.* (Nederman), lib. vi, pp. 112–113.

⁸⁸ It should be noted that these ascetic ideals were not intended to emasculate the Christian male. Indeed, the reformers deliberately employed the Roman and Greek ideal of masculine moderation however they took this ideal to its farthest extreme. In the reformers eyes, then, asceticism was the highest form of masculine expression. See Cooper and Leyser, "Gender", pp. 7–9, 14–19 and Brundage, *LSCS*, pp. 138–139.

⁸⁹ Brundage, *LSCS*, pp. 138–143.

⁹⁰ See chapter 3 for examples.

adoption of traditional normative masculine behaviour including practices of female abduction and accumulation.⁹¹ Such practices were not confined to powerful men within the Church and many ordinary priests undoubtedly maintained multiple sexual partners.⁹² Clerical marriage, concubinage and the hereditary transmission of clerical appointments were widely practised throughout the whole of western Christendom.⁹³ When this is taken into account the opinions of men such as Jonas of Orleans become highly illuminating. They illustrate that the conflict between the high moral values of the ascetic ecclesiastical intelligentsia and the traditional value systems of the secular world was raging within the Church itself. This internal struggle provides us with a microcosm with which to examine the much wider conflict between the secular and the religious norms regarding the avenues to social power.

During the early medieval period the Church struggled to increase its power and influence over secular society in many parts of Western Europe. The successive reform movements that swept the Western Church came to be a crucial ecclesiastical weapon in this struggle. These reform movements were characterised by a desire to escape the corruption of the secular world and return to the apostolic lifestyle of Jesus' followers. The increasing popularity of this ideal resulted in a remarkable explosion in the population of monastic communities. These expanding communities attracted secular patronage and dramatically increased the power and influence of the ecclesiastical authorities.⁹⁴ The flourishing monastic orders were committed to the promotion of the ascetic lifestyle free from the sinful pollution of the material world. The increasing prestige associated with the ascetic ideal is evident from the development of a complex body of theological literature concerning acceptable Christian codes of sexual conduct. This is best exemplified by the intense proliferation of penitential writings and canonical law texts from the ninth to eleventh centuries. By the end of the eleventh

⁹¹ See chapter 2.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ C.N.L. Brooke, "Gregorian Reform in Action, Clerical Marriage in England 1050–1200" in S.L. Thrupp (ed.), *Change in Medieval Society* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964), pp. 49–71, 53–54. H.E.J. Cowdrey, "Pope Gregory VII and the Chastity of the Clergy" in M. Frassetto (ed.), *Medieval Purity and Piety: Essays on Medieval Clerical Celibacy and Religious Reform* (New York: Garland, 1998), pp. 269–302. A.L. Barstow, *Married Priests and the Reforming Papacy* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), pp. 67–104 and Brundage, *LSCS*, pp. 134–152.

⁹⁴ Moore, *Revolution*, pp. 77–78.

century, then, an entire theological edifice had been built up around the behavioural codes expounded within the teachings of the early Christian fathers. One significant objective of this increasingly large corpus of ecclesiastical instructions was to promote the ideals of chastity and sexual abstinence which were represented as avenues for acquiring spiritual and social power.⁹⁵

During the final decades of the tenth century a more radical reform movement, founded upon fundamentalist ideals of moral rigorism, began to form within the ecclesiastical schools and within monastic communities such as Cluny in south-eastern France.⁹⁶ The motivations for this movement were similar to those which had spurred the previous reform efforts. They were similarly founded upon a deep-seated reaction towards the entanglement of the Church in worldly affairs.⁹⁷ The reformers wished to free the Church from its dependence upon powerful secular leaders and to protect its officials and property from secular intervention.⁹⁸ They, therefore, viewed clerical concubinage and the hereditary transmission of ecclesiastical offices as contemptible practices synonymous with simony and the corrupting influence of the secular world.⁹⁹ In addition, they were fired by a desire to cleanse society of the often volatile and overtly sexual behaviour inherent in traditional masculine norms and embodied by the activities of the warrior elite.¹⁰⁰ In order to facilitate the Church's independence and eradicate secular corruption, then, the reformers attempted to impose their own strict codes of morality and ethics upon both secular and ecclesiastical society. One significant development differentiated these reformers from previous reform movements. They had constructed

⁹⁵ "The aversion to sex that had become a central feature of Christian thought by the tenth century reflected a further characteristic of the early medieval Church: the ascendancy of the monastic ideal and the presumption that ascetic virtues represented the highest form of Christian life." Brundage, *LSCS*, p. 174, see also the references above.

⁹⁶ H.E.J. Cowdrey, *The Cluniacs and the Gregorian Reform* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), pp. 135–141.

⁹⁷ Brooke, "Gregorian", p. 50, Cowdrey *Cluniacs*, pp. 135–141, Cowdrey "Gregory", pp. 282–292 and Brundage, *LSCS*, p. 179.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Barstow, *Married Priests*, pp. 50–52.

¹⁰⁰ The nineteenth book of the *Decretum* of Bishop Burchard of Worms (1000–1025) is known as the *Corrector*. It is particularly concerned with the repression of what Burchard regarded as residual pagan activities. These include; the slaying of relatives, acts of brigandage, acts of sexual depravity and the performance of fertility rituals. See *MHP*, pp. 41–43, 321–345.

an impressive body of canonical law codes with which to implement their ideals.¹⁰¹ A prolific number of legal compilations were produced within the scriptoria of Western Christendom during the eleventh century. These compilations were based largely upon established writings from the ninth- and tenth-century corpus of penitential literature. However, the increasingly well developed administrative system of the Church ensured that the compilers of these new legal tracts were far more able to implement their rulings than their predecessors had been. The flourishing power of ecclesiastical bureaucracy during this period is reflected by the increased jurisdictional influence exerted by the ecclesiastical courts.¹⁰² One of the earliest and most influential of these legal compilations was the *Decretum*. This was a massive collection of canonical judgements comprising 1,785 chapters which was compiled in around 1000 by Bishop Burchard of Worms.¹⁰³ A series of similar, if somewhat more manageably sized, canonistic compilations were to follow. These included the *Collection in Five Books* compiled in central Italy between 1014–1024, Anselm of Lucca's *Collectio canonum una cum collectione minore* composed sometime between 1061–1073, and several influential canonistic works compiled by the Frankish bishop Ivo of Chartres (1091–1116).¹⁰⁴ All of these works were characterised by the desire to liberate the Church from secular influence; an objective which was inextricably linked to the enforcement the reformers' codes of moral sexual ethics upon society.¹⁰⁵

By the central years of the eleventh century the reform movement had become an extremely powerful force. In 1049 the reformers secured the appointment of their candidate, Leo IX, to the papacy. Leo worked to restructure and reorganise the papal administration in order that the ideals of the reform movement could be disseminated rapidly into society.¹⁰⁶ Yet, it was during the pontificate of Pope Gregory VII

¹⁰¹ Brundage, *LSCS*, p. 180.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 223–228 and Brooke, “Gregorian”, p. 62.

¹⁰³ *Decretum* in *PL*, 140, J.P. Migne (ed.) (Paris: Migne, 1853), 537–1058.

¹⁰⁴ *Collectio Canonum in V libris*, M. Fornasari (ed.) in *Corpus Christianorum, series latina, continuatio medievalis*, vol. 6 (Turnhout: Brépols, 1970), Anselm of Lucca, *Collectio Canonum una cum collectione minore*, F. Thaner (ed.) (Oeniponte, 1906–1915, reprinted Aalen, 1965), vol. i, Ivo of Chartres, *Decretum* and *Panormia*, *PL*, 161, J.P. Migne (ed.) (Paris: Migne, 1855), 47–1036, 1045–1344. See also Brundage, *LSCS*, pp. 181–182.

¹⁰⁵ Brundage, *LSCS*, pp. 182–183.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 180. See also J. Gilchrist, *Canon Law in the Age of Reform, 11th and 12th Centuries* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1993), iii, p. 21, xi, pp. 264, 277 and Cowdrey, “Gregory”, pp. 269–270.

(1073–1085), that the policies of the reform movement were most vigorously enforced. During Gregory's reign the aims and objectives of the reformers were pursued so tenaciously that, thereafter, the movement would forever bear his name.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, during the Gregorian pontificate the rigorous moral codes of the reform movement were backed by a considerable body of law and implemented by an increasingly powerful juridical system.¹⁰⁸ It is unsurprising, then, that by the end of the eleventh century the influence of the reform movement had been felt across western Christendom. In order to understand the impact that this movement was having upon the values of secular society then we must briefly examine the reformers' agenda in more detail.

As already noted, the objectives of the reform movement were focussed upon freeing the Church from lay influence and control. Ecclesiastical attempts to regulate secular marriage were, very much, employed to this end.¹⁰⁹ The reformers' objectives in this respect have been ably summed up by Brundage:

First, marriage must be monogamous; second marriage should be indissoluble; third, marital unions should be contracted freely by the parties themselves, not by their parents or families; fourth, marriage represents the only legally protected type of sexual relationship, and therefore concubinage must be eliminated... fifth, and as a corollary of the fourth principle, all sexual activity must be punished by legal sanctions; sixth, all sexual activity, marital and non-marital, falls solely under ecclesiastical jurisdiction; and seventh, marriage must become exogamous, and intermarriage within related groups of families should therefore be eliminated.¹¹⁰

These objectives were constructed in direct opposition to traditional value systems that expressed prosperity, wealth and power through the sexual idiom. The implications of these codes for traditional patriarchal systems were therefore profound. It has already been argued that long standing practices of female accumulation continued to have a tremendous cultural significance within many of the early medieval societies of Western Europe. The warrior elites within these societies regarded expressions of virility and control over sexual access to be synonymous with their power. Yet, such attitudes contravened the

¹⁰⁷ Barstow, *Married Priests*, p. 67.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 67–104 and Brundage, *LSCS*, pp. 179–187.

¹⁰⁹ See C.N.L. Brooke, *The Medieval Idea of Marriage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 56–60 and G. Duby, *Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages*, J. Dunnett (trans.) (Bodmin: Polity Press, 1994), pp. 15–17.

¹¹⁰ Brundage, *LSCS*, p. 183.

ascetic ethics upon which the reform movement was founded. The reformers were clearly concerned about the moral and spiritual corruption which traditional practices of resource polygyny were inflicting upon their flock. They also understood that such behaviour encouraged political struggles and fostered levels of violence and social instability which acted against the interests of the Church.¹¹¹ The maintenance of multiple wives and concubines created pools of competing heirs who frequently became involved in bitter internecine struggles. Such struggles were particularly disruptive when they occurred between sons born of illicit royal unions because they resulted in widespread factional conflict, divided rules and fragmented polities. In addition, the practice of female accumulation heightened the competition for available women. This resulted in an institutionalised sense of sexual jealousy which manifested itself in violently retributive notions of male guardianship.¹¹² Furthermore, both concubinage and female abduction contributed towards the maintenance of the warrior fraternity whose membership included sons who, as yet, had been unable to secure a share of their paternal inheritance.¹¹³ The social instability created by succession competitions and internecine strife further encouraged and facilitated the unpredictable behaviour which such individuals were almost obligated to pursue. As we have seen, that behaviour was characterised by unrestrained violence, the ravishment of women and slaving raiding activities.¹¹⁴

Ecclesiastics, therefore, appear to have realised that if the Church was to gain independence from secular authorities then it would have to attempt to limit the unruly behaviour of these warrior groups, thereby establishing a more peaceful and stable social order. It should therefore be unsurprising that the attempted imposition of the Truce of God in certain continental territories, accompanied by the popular movement of the Peace of God, were of fundamental significance for the crystallization of reform ideals.¹¹⁵ The religiously motivated peace movement prohibited the spilling of Christian blood and attempted to restrain the violent activities of the warrior fraternity.¹¹⁶ The reformers'

¹¹¹ See chapter 2.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Moore, *Revolution*, pp. 8–13.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, see also, G. Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, C. Postan (trans.) (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), p. 132 and H. Goetz, "Protection of the Church, Defence of the Law,

attempts to increase their control over this volatile element of society were further developed through the establishment of the idea of the *miles Dei* (soldier of God) and the subsequent crusading enterprises. These were intended to imbue the activities of the warrior group with a distinctly Christian ethos and redirect their disruptive energies away from the Christian flock.¹¹⁷ The ecclesiastical hierarchy also expounded the ideals of monogamy together with the indissolubility of marriage in an attempt to restrict the social turmoil created by traditional practices of concubinage and resource polygyny. Codes concerning ecclesiastically sanctioned ideals of legitimacy and exogamy were also intended to limit traditional masculine competition and reduce internecine conflict.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, codes that recognised an individual's right to consent in marriage were intended to significantly reduce the power of patriarchal guardianship and weaken secular control over the regulations of marriage.¹¹⁹ This, in turn, facilitated the ecclesiastical appropriation of the sanctioning of unions and thus increased the prestige and jurisdictional power of the Church. The reformers' recognition of an individual's right of consent significantly undermined more traditional practices such as marriage by abduction and ravishment.¹²⁰ Through the acceptance of these revised codes of behaviour the reformers hoped to create a more disciplined and centralised society under the firm guiding hand of the ecclesiastical authorities and aided by monogamous, centralised Christian rulers.¹²¹ Their eventual success in instilling these normative

and Reform: On the Purposes and Character of the Peace of God" in T. Head and R. Landes (eds.), *The Peace of God, Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 259–279.

¹¹⁷ Duby, *Chivalrous*, p. 120.

¹¹⁸ Duby has noted that "while most of the young men were kept in a state of celibacy and danger the risk of fragmented inheritance was certainly less." *Ibid.*, p. 120. See also Brundage, *LSCS*, p. 194 and Brooke, *Medieval Ideal*, pp. 134–136.

¹¹⁹ Brundage, *LSCS*, pp. 187–228 and Brooke, *Medieval Ideal*, pp. 128–133.

¹²⁰ J. Brundage, "Rape and Marriage in Medieval Canon Law" in J. Brundage (ed.), *Sex, Law and Marriage in the Middle Ages* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1993), pp. 62–75. See also, Brooke, *Medieval Ideal*, pp. 56–57, 128–133, Duby, *Marriage*, p. 17 and Brundage *LSCS*, pp. 209–210.

¹²¹ These objectives continued to have a powerful resonance during the twelfth century, as John of Salisbury argued "What is the use of the military order? To protect the Church, to attack faithlessness, to venerate the priesthood, to avert injuries to the poor, to pacify provinces, to shed blood... for their brothers, and to give up their lives if it is necessary." "*Sed quis est usus militiae ordinatae? Tueri Ecclesiam, perfidiam impugnare, sacerdotum venerari pauperum propulsare iniurias, pacare provinciam, pro fratribus... fundere sanguinem et, si opus est, animam ponere.*" *Poli.* (Webb), lib. vi, cp. viii, pp. 222–223, translation by Nederman, *Poli.*, p. 116.

directives amongst the secular elite, even if they were only adhered to in theory rather than practise, would significantly reduce the prestige associated with unrestrained violence and overtly sexual behaviour. It would also dramatically affect attitudes towards the institution of slavery which was heavily associated with traditional expressions of normative masculine prowess and sexual domination.

We have already seen how the early Christian fathers had established a powerful symbolic association between slavery and sexual sin; an association which was also readily apparent within the rhetoric of the eleventh-century reform movement.¹²² Indeed, it would seem almost inevitable that, as the reformers attempted to extol the virtues of monogamy and chastity, they would be obliged to confront an institution which was so clearly founded upon sexual exploitation. This issue had been addressed as early as the fifth century by Salvian of Marseille who complained bitterly that sexual relationships with slaves undermined both the morals of the master and the position of the free women in his household.¹²³ Furthermore, a version of the *Life of St Brigit*, attributed to the seventh century Irish author Cogitosus, related the following tale which clearly acknowledged the temptation to sin posed by the inherent sexual availability of slave women.

A layman who was at once high-born and deceitful in character was burning lust for a certain woman and cunningly contemplating how he might indulge in intercourse with her, entrusted his precious silver brooch to her for safe keeping. Then he took it back unknown to her and threw it into the sea so that, since she would not be able to give it back to him, she might become his slave-girl and he might subsequently use her sexually as he pleased.¹²⁴

The object of this individual's desire, who is characterised as a "chaste woman", subsequently fled to the protection of St. Brigit who miraculously instigated the recovery of the missing brooch from inside a fish! As a result the girl retained her chastity and the lustful man was shamed into penance. Interestingly, in his version of the *Vita*, Cogitosus chose

¹²² See below.

¹²³ *Salvian of Marseille, The Governance of God*, 7, 4, cited in Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, p. 179. Despite this Salvian states that such relationships were very common indeed, see chapter 2.

¹²⁴ S. Connolly and J.-M. Picard (ed. and trans.), "Cogitosus's *Life of St Brigit*: content and value" (includes English translation), *JRSAL*, 117 for 1987, 1988, chapter 25, pp. 5–27, 21–22, for a full discussion of the context of the text see, pp. 5–10 and Sharpe, "*Vitae Brigitae*", pp. 81–106.

not to portray Brigit as the daughter of a slave concubine but rather stated that she was “born in Ireland of Christian and noble parents.”¹²⁵ The contents of the above story perhaps explain why the author did not wish to portray this particular *ancilla dei* as an actual *ancilla*.

Similarly, the earliest penitential authors also appear to have recognised that the actions of enslaved men and women could not be judged in the same way, as could those of free individuals.¹²⁶ These authors clearly understood that the condition of slavery negated the personal volition of the slave in both a physical and a moral sense. This sentiment was expressed within penitentials directing that enslaved individuals should be judged less harshly than free individuals because they were unable to make moral and ethical choices of their own.¹²⁷ As a consequence, enslaved individuals were allocated a much lighter penance for their crimes. Such sentiments were repeated and endorsed by influential figures of the later reform movement. They are clearly evident in a semi-homiletic tract from the early eleventh-century *Laws of Cnut* composed, most probably, by Archbishop Wulfstan of York who was, very much, a product of late tenth-century monastic reform.

For the fear of God and out of reverence to him, greater leniency shall always be shown in passing judgement and in imposing penance upon the weak than (in doing so) upon the strong... And therefore we must make due allowance and carefully distinguish between age and youth, wealth and poverty, freeman and slaves, the sound and the sick... And discrimination with regard to these circumstances must be shown both in (imposing) ecclesiastical amends and in (passing) secular judgement... Likewise, in many cases of evil-doing, when a man is an involuntary agent, he is more entitled to clemency because he acted as he did from compulsion... And

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 13. Connolly proposes that Cogitosus's text is the earliest version of the saint's life. Yet, I would contend that the author's clear modification of Brigit's lineage and the fact that Cogitosus's version contains far fewer overtly pagan overtones would suggest that it was composed after the *Vita Prima*, a point of view which is endorsed by Sharpe “*Vitae Brigitae*”, pp. 81–106, 82.

¹²⁶ M. Sheehan, “Theory and Practice: Marriage of the Unfree and the Poor in Medieval Society”, *MStuds.* vol. 1, 1988, pp. 457–487, 468.

¹²⁷ For example, the eighth-century *Poenitentiale Valicellanum I* states “Understand this brothers: when male or female slaves come to you seeking penance, do not oppress them... because male and female slaves are not free agents.” (“*Et hoc scitote fratres, ut dum venerint ad vos servi vel ancille querentes penitentiam, non eos gravetis... quia servi et ancille non sunt in sua potestate.*”) *Die Bussbücher und die Bussdisciplin der Kirche nach handschriftlichen Quellen dargestellt* H.J. Schmitz (ed.) (Mainz, 1883), p. 243, translation and citation from Sheehan, “Marriage of the Unfree”, p. 468.

if anyone does anything unintentionally, the case is entirely different from that one who acts deliberately.¹²⁸

Wulfstan, therefore, acknowledged that the slave's capacity to avoid sinful behaviour was extremely limited. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how slaves could be held, in any way, morally responsible for their actions when they were constantly exposed to the threat of physical and sexual abuse at the hands of their masters.¹²⁹ Although the severity of their punishment was reduced, slaves were still clearly expected to perform penance.¹³⁰ This reveals that the ecclesiastical authorities believed that slaves were to some extent accountable for their sinful actions, which, in turn, prompts us to ask a significant question. Did the elite reformers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries feel that their revised norms of sexual behaviour were applicable to every individual within society? In particular, did they feel that their morally rigorous ethics should also apply to those individuals who had little or no control over their physical and sexual conduct?

A consideration of contemporary ecclesiastical attitudes concerning the ability of servile couples to contract legitimate and indissoluble marriages is central to resolving this issue. Yet, there does not appear to have been any significant ecclesiastical debate regarding slave marriages until the middle of the twelfth century. The ecclesiastical authorities appear to have been more concerned about the eradication of illicit unions between clerics and their *ancillae*.¹³¹ However, in around 1138, the Frankish theologian Walter Mortagne stimulated some debate on the issue by arguing that a marriage contracted between two slaves should be indissoluble even in instances when their lord had not openly

¹²⁸ "Forðam a man sceal þam unstrangan men for Godes lufe 7 ége liþelicor deman 7 scrifon þonne þam strangan... 7 þi we sceolon medmian 7 gescadlice todeþan ylde 7 geogoþe, welan 7 wædle, freot 7 þeowet, hæle 7 unhæle... And ægher man sceal ge on godcundan scrifan ge on woruldcundan doman, þas þinge tosceadan... Eac on mænigre dæde, þonne man byð nydwyrhta, þonne byð se georgeorges þe bet wyrðe, þe he for neode dyde þæt þæt he dyde... 7 gyf hwa hwæt ungewealdes gedæð, ne byð þæt eallunga na gelic, þe hit gewealdes gewurþe." *Cnut II*, 68.1–3, *Die Gesetze*, p. 354.

¹²⁹ Sheehan, "Marriage of the Unfree", p. 469.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 471. This did not necessarily mean that the enslaved individual took an active role in committing the sin. For example, the early Irish *Penitential of Cummean* commented that a small boy who had been sexually abused by an older male would still have to perform penance, see chapter 3.

¹³¹ Stuard, "Ancillary", p. 11.

consented to the union.¹³² A few years later the canonical compiler Peter Lombard argued conversely that the nature of the servile condition limited the slave's capacity for marriage. He, therefore, felt that unions between "*servi et ancillae*" should only occur with the express permission of their master.¹³³ Thus, it was not until the second half of the twelfth century that discussions regarding the slave's right to be joined in wedlock became a seriously contended topic within theological and canonical debates.¹³⁴ A definitive ruling on the issue was finally taken by the English pope Adrian IV (1154–1159) who issued a directive stating:

...marriages between slaves (*inter servos...matrimonia*) should not be forbidden on any account, and if they are contracted against prohibition and against the wishes of lords they should not for this reason be dissolved by ecclesiastical law, although the service due to their lords should not be reduced on account of this.¹³⁵

The consensual marital norms of the reform movement expounded in Adrian's directive were thereby tempered by his closing statement which acknowledged the continuing need for master's to dominate and exploit their slaves. In spite of the Church's relative disinterest on the issue of slave marriages, Adrian's eventual recognition of servile unions has been seen as a fundamentally important progression towards the recognition of the humanity of the slave. For example, Sheehan has argued that the reformers clearly understood the limited nature of the slave's moral responsibilities. Nevertheless, they also promoted the view that the sexual conduct of slaves should fall within a framework of marriage that was common to all Christians, be they free or servile. Sheehan, regards this acknowledgement as "one of the principal achievements in social thinking in the middle ages."¹³⁶ Samson takes a slightly less positive view of ecclesiastical intentions behind the ruling but, generally agrees with Sheehan that the Church's recognition of

¹³² Walter of Mortagne, *De Conjugio*, PL, 176, J.P. Migne (ed.) (Paris: Migne, 1854), pp. 165–66. See also Sheehan, "Marriage of the Unfree", pp. 475–476.

¹³³ P. Lombardi *magistri sententiarum, parisiensis episcopi Opera omnia: accedunt Magistri Bandini theologi doctissimi, Sententiarum libri quatuor*, PL, 192, J.P. Migne (ed.) (Paris: Migne, 1855), lib. 4, dist. 34, pp. 926–927 and dist. 36, p. 930. See also Sheehan, "Marriage of the Unfree", pp. 472, 476.

¹³⁴ Sheehan, "Marriage of the Unfree", p. 478.

¹³⁵ Quote cited in Duggan, "*Servus servorum*", p. 189.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 484.

slave marriages was designed to restrict fornication and 'illegal' sexual activity *amongst* slave couples.¹³⁷ Yet, neither of these explanations is particularly satisfactory because both fail to recognise that sexual domination was a defining characteristic of the master-slave relationship. When we examine Adrian's ruling from this perspective then it appears that concerns regarding the moral purity of the slave may have been of secondary significance. The reformers were generally far more worried about the effect which slave holding was having upon the personal morality of the slave holder. As we have seen, the reformers were well aware that sexual accessibility of the slave would have provided the master with a constant temptation for fornication and/or adultery.¹³⁸ Slavery thereby constituted a direct threat to the implementation of the reformers' codes of sexual behaviour. Yet, in spite of this, the reformers appear to have been extremely reluctant to make any concerted effort to eradicate the sexual exploitation of slaves. This reluctance, not only highlights their ambivalence towards the plight of the slave, it also reveals their understanding that any alteration to the institution of slavery could have very undesirable social implications.

The acknowledgement of the slave's right to an indissoluble marital union had the potential to drastically affect the level of power that a master exercised over his slave. Indeed, the master's power was founded upon his control over the sexuality and reproductive qualities of his slaves.¹³⁹ The constant threat of sexual abuse and familial separation together with more subtle methods of favouritism and feigned paternity were the master's most effective tools in the process of subjection.¹⁴⁰ The recognition of slave marriages would essentially remove these tools or, at least, significantly diminish their effectiveness. This diminution of the master's power over the slave, thereby, presented a direct threat to the hierarchical social order which the reformers sought not only to preserve but, also, to improve upon. As a consequence the reformers were extremely reluctant to criticise or modify the institution of slavery even though it stood in direct opposition to some of their most fundamental ideals regarding sexual behaviour. Indeed, they dragged

¹³⁷ Samson, "End", pp. 112–113.

¹³⁸ See notes 124 and 128 above and note 189 below.

¹³⁹ See chapter 1.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

their feet on this issue for several centuries.¹⁴¹ The eventual recognition of the slave's legal freedom to contract marriage was spurred by two inter-connected objectives which paid only superficial lip service to concerns regarding the plight of the slave. The true dynamic behind this significant social change was the ecclesiastical desire to promote monogamy and limit the sexual partners and, therefore, the sexual sins, of the slave holders.

Adrian's directive appears to have taken a significant amount of time to disseminate. Nevertheless, by the turn of the thirteenth century the slave's right to contract marital unions was generally recognised throughout Christendom. Yet, there were undoubtedly problems in implementing such a judgement in practical terms.¹⁴² Indeed, it appears likely that the sexual exploitation of slaves continued to occur well into the high Middle-Ages.¹⁴³ Many slaves remained at the mercy of their master's whim concerning their choice of marital partner.¹⁴⁴ At a symbolic and cultural level, however, the Church's codes concerning monogamy, sexual sin and the recognition of the slave's marital rights were to have a profound effect upon social perceptions of slavery. In traditional Germanic and 'Celtic' societies the accumulation of female slaves and their employment as sexual partners had been highly significant for expressing wealth, prestige, and power. Furthermore, masters had traditionally used sexual intercourse with their female slaves as a means to assert their patriarchal authority and domination over their dependants, both male and female. The general acceptance of the reform codes of behaviour amongst the elite (however loosely they were followed in reality) would render such perceptions obsolete. From the reformers' perspective excessive sexual behaviour and the practice of taking multiple sexual partners were indicative of moral and physical weakness and spiritual pollution. The general acceptance of these sentiments, at least in principle, meant that acts of rape and fornication

¹⁴¹ From the beginnings of the movement reform ecclesiastics had been at pains to stress the importance of an individual's consent to the marital union. These reformers, however, appear to have been far less keen to expound this same ideal in relation to the slave's freedom from his master's control in relation to servile unions. Indeed, even during the late twelfth century many reformers maintained that seignorial consent was an essential prerequisite for any marital union between slaves, see Sheehan, "Marriage of the Unfree", pp. 472–482.

¹⁴² Ibid., pp. 477–487.

¹⁴³ Goodich, "*Ancilla*", pp. 120–123.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 122.

were no longer considered to be laudable actions amongst the secular elite.¹⁴⁵ As a result any master who made sexual advances towards his slave women would not only be committing a grave crime in the eyes of the Church but, also, soiling his personal reputation. The eventual ecclesiastical recognition of slave marriages meant that a master who attempted to assert his hegemony through the traditional idiom of sexual dominance could, potentially, be committing the heinous sin of adultery with another man's wife. The reform movement had, thereby, instigated a quantum shift in the cultural perceptions regarding acceptable codes of sexual behaviour, which were to significantly reduce the social prestige of slave holding. Such changing perceptions may be taken as an indication of a more general and far-reaching reconfiguration of the way in which the societies of Western Europe were to define power and gender.¹⁴⁶

Challenging Warrior Norms in Anglo-Saxon Society: A Case Study

As has already been commented, the behavioural revisions expounded by the eleventh-century reform movement represented a direct challenge to the traditional patriarchal norms of the communities of medieval Britain. The introduction of these codes would have profound cultural implications for the communities of Wales, Scotland and Ireland during the twelfth century. Yet, it was the elite within English society who were the first to nominally accept these revised behavioural norms.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, it was arguably through the political and cultural influence of the English elite that the reformers' codes were eventually disseminated or imposed upon the other communities of the British Isles. In order to understand the profound impact of these cultural changes, then, we must initially turn our attentions to evidence for the introduction of these revised behavioural norms into medieval English society.

¹⁴⁵ Brundage, "Rape", pp. 62–75 and *LSCS*, p. 210.

¹⁴⁶ See below.

¹⁴⁷ Reform ideals were undoubtedly prevalent within the ecclesiastical communities of Ireland, Scotland and Wales during the eleventh century. I would argue, however, that these ideals had made little impact upon the behavioural norms of the secular populations within these regions prior to the twelfth century. Indeed, as we shall see these ideals had made surprisingly little impact upon Anglo-Saxon society prior to the Norman Conquest.

Some of the oldest extant Anglo-Saxon documents suggest that the Church authorities had been attempting to modify the sexual behaviour of the English laity and clergy from a very early date. The late-seventh century *Law of Wihfred* revealed a strong ecclesiastical influence when it directed that “*unrihtthemed mæn*” (“men living in illicit unions”) should regularise their relationships.¹⁴⁸ Similarly, the seventh-century *Penitential of Theodore* stated that any man who maintained a concubine would not be permitted to enter the priesthood.¹⁴⁹ The eighth-century ecclesiastical historian Bede appears to have regarded all sexual behaviour as intrinsically sinful. Bede’s attitudes towards sex and marriage, like those of Jonas of Orleans, were founded upon the opinions of St. Augustine. In his *Historia Ecclesiastica* Bede places the following words into the mouth of the sixth-century pope Gregory the Great.

We do not reckon marriage as a sin; but because even lawful intercourse cannot take place without fleshly desire, it is right to abstain from entering a sacred place, for the desire itself can by no means be without sin.¹⁵⁰

Ecclesiastical attitudes towards sexual behaviour were not limited to concerns regarding the spiritual pollution of holy places. In 786 a Legatine council made a concerted attempt to regularise secular unions within Anglo-Saxon society.¹⁵¹ This attempt was clearly intended to limit the social disruption caused by English kings practising resource polygyny. *Chapter 12* of the report, issued by the council to Pope Hadrian states:

We decreed that in the ordination of kings no one shall permit the assent of evil men to prevail, but kings are to be lawfully chosen by the priests and elders of the people, and are not to be those begotten in adultery or incest; for just as in our times according to the canons a bastard cannot attain to the priesthood, so neither can he who was not born of legitimate marriage be the Lord’s anointed and king of the whole kingdom and inheritor of the land...¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ *Wihfred 3, Die Gesetze*, p. 12.

¹⁴⁹ “*Si quis concubinas habet, non debet ordinari.*”, *PT, CED*, vol iii, p. 185.

¹⁵⁰ “*Nec haec dicentes culpam deputamus esse coniugium; sed quia ipsa licita ammixtio coniugis sine uoluntate carnis fieri non potest, a sacri loci ingressu abstinendum est, quia uoluntas ipsa esse sine culpa nullatenus potest.*” *EHEP*, pp. 94–97.

¹⁵¹ C. Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils c. 650–850* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), pp. 153–190.

¹⁵² “*Duodecimo sermone sanximus, ut in ordinatione regum nullus permittat pravorum praevalere assensum: sed legitime reges sacerdotibus et senioribus populi eligantur, et non de adulterio vel incæstu procreati: quia sicut nostris temporibus ad sacerdotium secundum canones adulter pervenire non potest;*

In around 746 King Æthelbald of Mercia had been similarly chastised by Boniface and other missionary bishops for refusing to take a wife and for selecting his concubines from consecrated women. Interestingly, they had compared his lascivious behaviour with the powerfully symbolic example of a slave who had slept with his master's wife.

To give an illustration to what punishment is a slave (*puer*) liable from his master if he violates his master's wife in adultery? How much more he who defiles with the filth of his lust the bride of Christ, the creator of heaven and earth.¹⁵³

Yet, despite such fulminations the Church authorities appear to have had little success in imposing their codes of behaviour upon English secular or ecclesiastical society. Nearly a century later Pope John VIII felt obliged to write to King Burgred of Mercia complaining "the sin of fornication is especially rife among you."¹⁵⁴ Pope John, therefore, commanded that all those who were under Burgred's rule "whether laymen or clerics" should avoid such lascivious behaviour in future.¹⁵⁵ Some sixteen years later Fulk, archbishop of Reims, wrote a similar letter to King Alfred the Great commenting that

He (Fulk) had heard that he (Alfred) was concerned to cut down with the sword of the word that most perverse opinion, arisen from pagan errors, until then surviving among that people (the English). This opinion seemed to permit bishops and priests to have women living near them, and anyone who wished to approach kinswomen of his own stock, and, moreover to defile women consecrated to God, and although married, to have at the same time a concubine. How contrary all these things are to sound faith he shows by most convincing examples and cites in support the authority of the holy fathers.¹⁵⁶

sic nec christus Domini esse valet et rex totius regni, et hæres patriæ, qui ex legitimo non fuerit conubio generatus." *CED*, vol. iii, pp. 452–453, translation taken from *EHD*, vol. i, 191, pp. 837–838.

¹⁵³ "*Ut verbi gratia dicamus, cujus vindictereus sit puer apud dominum suum, qui uxorem domini sui adulterio violaverit. Quanto magis ille, qui sponsam Christi, Creatoris cæli et terre, putredine suæ libidinis commaculaverit.*" *CED*, vol. iii, pp. 350–356, translation modified from *EHD*, vol. i, 177 p. 817.

¹⁵⁴ "...*fornicationis in vobis peccatum maxime regnat.*" In addition, the ecclesiastical authorities once again voiced their concerns regarding the English tendency towards marrying or defiling holy women, see *Epistolæ III*, *PL*, 80, J.P. Migne (ed.) (Paris: Migne, 1850), p. 607, translation from *EHD*, vol. i, 220, p. 880.

¹⁵⁵ "...*tam laicos quam clericos.*" *Ibid*.

¹⁵⁶ "*Audierat enim, quod perversissimam sectam paganis erroribus exortam et in illa gente tunc usque relictam verbi mucrone satageret amputare. Que secta suggerere videbatur episcopis et presbiteris subintroductas habere mulieres, ad propinquas quoque generis sui, quisque vellet, accedere, insuper et*

In this brief tract, then, Fulk clearly identified those practices which characterised the patriarchal systems of female accumulation extant in ninth-century Anglo-Saxon society. His concerns suggest that concubinage and resource polygyny continued to be widely practised within both the secular and the ecclesiastical communities of Alfred's Christian kingdom. Furthermore, he indicates that Germanic practices that accepted marriage within the kindred group remained prevalent despite ecclesiastical norms concerning the importance of exogamy. He also suggests that the rape (or at the very least the seduction) of nuns was considered to be a relatively common problem within English society. Even more significantly, he recognised that all of these abhorrent practices were a result of the continuation of Germanic customs which had survived from the pre-Christian period. Fulk, therefore, encouraged King Alfred to use his monarchical power and influence to eradicate these heathen practices from the top down. His letter suggests that some of the central tenets of the reforming ideology were already in place by the end of the ninth century. Yet, despite Fulk's apparent zeal his proposed codes of behaviour gained little social credence and English kings continued to express their wealth and power in a traditional manner. Clunies Ross has suggested that the consistent ecclesiastical complaints regarding the failure of leaders to regularise their sexual relationships is indicative of a wider power struggle. This struggle raged between the Church and the secular elite whose authority was directly challenged by such revised behavioural codes because their influence and prosperity "...was often expressed symbolically in a sexual idiom, by a practical demonstration of their virility."¹⁵⁷

In spite of the bitter complaints of the continental authorities there is some evidence to suggest that elements within the Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical hierarchy were willing to tolerate and even adopt such traditional expressions of normative masculine power. The consistent complaints regarding priests who were cohabiting with women suggest that such practices were widespread and generally accepted.¹⁵⁸ This is clearly revealed in a judgement made by Egbert, archbishop of York

sacratas deo feminas incestare, uxorem habens concubinam simul habere. Que omnia, quam sane fidei sint adversa, documentis manifestat evidentissimis ex sanctorum patrum prolatis auctoritatibus." Flodoard Von Reims, *Die Geschichte Der Reimser Kirche*, M. Stratmann (ed.) (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1998), p. 386, translation from *EHD*, vol. i, 224, pp. 886–887.

¹⁵⁷ Clunies Ross, "Concubinage" p. 24.

¹⁵⁸ For examples see notes 153–156 above and notes 175, 179 and 187 below.

during the central years of the eighth century, which stated that it was possible for a married man to be ordained as a bishop or deacon provided that "...he has not a second wife nor one left by a (former) husband."¹⁵⁹ The need for Egbert to make such an explicit statement prohibiting polygamous men from obtaining ordination speaks volumes concerning the acceptable norms of early English society. These traditional norms appear to have been extremely enduring, at least within Egbert's diocese. The *Law of the Northumbrian Priests* suggests that womanising clergy were far from uncommon in the northern province during the early decades of the eleventh century. Indeed, the author of this tract felt obliged to rule that "...if a priest leaves a woman and takes another, let him be anathema."¹⁶⁰

Even the venerable Bede's complaints regarding the illicit sexual behaviour of his countrymen appear more tolerant than those of the later eleventh-century reforming ecclesiastics.¹⁶¹ Bede had very little to say regarding concubinage or illegitimate offspring and he focussed his harshest condemnations upon couples who maintained incestuous unions.¹⁶² He was, however, extremely horrified when he learned of the events at the double monastery at Coldingham in which a community of monks were said to have succumbed to sinful temptation and entered into sexual relationships with the nuns with whom they

¹⁵⁹ "...si secundam non habuît [uxorem], nec a marito relictam." *CED*, vol. iii, p. 410, translation from *MHP*, p. 239.

¹⁶⁰ "Gif preost cwenan forlete 7 oðre nime anathema sit!" *Norðhymbra preosta lagu 35*, *Die Gesetze*, vol. i, pp. 380–385, 382, translation from *EHD*, vol. i, 52, pp. 471–476, 474. It has been argued that this legal tract was compiled by Archbishop Wulfstan of York. Yet, the implicit inference that priests might have wives is not in keeping with Wulfstan's reforming attitudes. Indeed, Patrick Wormald has convincingly refuted Wulfstan's authorship of the tract arguing that the most likely author would have been one of Wulfstan's successors, see P. Wormald, "Archbishop Wulfstan and the Holiness of Society" in D. Pelteret (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon History: Basic Readings* (New York: Garland, 2000), pp. 191–224, 213. The fact that the compiler also felt obliged to reiterate the prohibitions against secular polygyny and against sleeping with holy women (*ibid.* codes 61, 63) suggests that Archbishop Wulfstan's preaching on these issues had been less than effective.

¹⁶¹ For example, Bede places the following words into the mouth of Gregory the Great "If there are any who are clerics but in minor orders and who cannot be continent, they should marry and receive their stipends outside the community." ("*Siqui uero sunt clerici extra sacros ordines constituti, qui se continere non possunt, sortire uxores debent, et stipendia sua exterius accipere.*") *EHEP*, pp. 80–81.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 83–85, 151, see also Clunies Ross, "Concubinage" pp. 23–24. This attitude of tolerance towards traditional patterns of behaviour is also extant in the ninth-century Old English *Penitential of Pseudo-Egbert* see chapter 2.

cohabited.¹⁶³ Bede's revulsion regarding the scandalous events at Coldingham suggests that this was an isolated incident and does not reflect a general trend toward sexual debauchery within the monastic orders of his age. Nevertheless, he felt obliged to write a letter to Egbert, archbishop of York, requesting that the monasteries of Northumbria be "...transformed by synodal authority from wanton living to chastity."¹⁶⁴ In particular, Bede was concerned that secular individuals were buying episcopal privileges and then founding monastic houses which they then populated with unseemly monks and their wives.¹⁶⁵ Unisex monasteries do appear to have been popular within early Anglo-Saxon England.¹⁶⁶ Such houses were under the direct authority of autonomous abbesses which should be far from surprising.¹⁶⁷ We have already seen that independent Anglo-Saxon noblewomen expressed their power by adopting normative masculine characteristics and strategies.¹⁶⁸ The existence of double monasteries, therefore, provides a further indication that certain ecclesiastical institutions had adopted traditionally symbolic practices of female accumulation, irrespective of any directly sexual motives. The ambivalent attitude of the early Anglo-Saxon Church towards such traditional practices is clearly evident in the *Penitential of Theodore* that states (my italics):

It is not permitted to men to have female religious, nor are men (permitted) to the women; *yet we shall not destroy that which is the custom in this land.*¹⁶⁹

The early Anglo-Saxon laws also adopted a relatively neutral tone with regards to sexual conduct.¹⁷⁰ Despite the very vocal concerns of the ecclesiastical hierarchy the practice of concubinage remained generally outside of the scope of the legislator's interests. Prior to the tenth century Anglo-Saxon legal concerns regarding sexual behaviour revolved

¹⁶³ *EHEP*, pp. 420–427.

¹⁶⁴ "...e quibus velim aliqua de luxuria ad castitatem." *CED*, vol. iii, pp. 319–321, translation from *EHD*, vol. i, 170, pp. 804–806.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Clunies Ross, "Concubinage", p. 33. For example, there were double houses at Whitby, Minster in Sheppey and at Wimborne. See S. Thompson, *Women Religious, The Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), p. 54.

¹⁶⁷ Thompson, *Women Religious*, p. 54.

¹⁶⁸ See chapter 3.

¹⁶⁹ (My italics) "*Non licet viris feminas habere monachas neque feminis viros; tamen nos non dertruamus illud quod consuetudo est in hac terra.*" *PT, II, vi.8, CED*, vol. iii, p. 195, translation taken from Clunies Ross, "Concubinage", p. 33.

¹⁷⁰ *Wiltred 3* being the notable exception, see above.

predominantly around traditional disputes over guardianship, compensation and sexual jealousy.¹⁷¹ Even within the late ninth-century law codes Alfred the Great's legal judgements regarding sexual behaviour remained focussed upon the pragmatic practicalities of *mund* payment.¹⁷² In spite of Fulk of Reims' high expectations, the imposition of a strict code of religiously guided sexual ethics does not appear to have been one of Alfred's most pressing objectives. However, when we compare Alfred's laws with those of Æthelred from just over a century later then we notice a striking change in the tone of the legal documentation. Indeed, the law codes of Æthelred appear to provide us with evidence of the increasingly pervasive influence of the ecclesiastical authorities upon the secular world. Æthelred codes *I–IV* are decidedly secular in tone and do not differ greatly from the Alfredian codes from a century before. Codes *V–VIII*, however, are written in a homiletic style and are primarily concerned with the enforcement of ideals regarding morally acceptable conduct. These later codes read, very much, like a comprehensive manifesto for the reform movement.¹⁷³ Æthelred *V, I* prohibited pre-Christian practices and promoted social stability and centralised kingship.

The first provision is: that we all love and honour one God, and zealously observe one Christian faith, and wholly renounce all heathen practices. We have confirmed, both by word and by pledge, our firm intention of observing one Christian faith under the authority of one king.¹⁷⁴

Furthermore, in an attempt to reduce violent succession competitions and internecine strife the laws prohibited the practice of concubinage, resource polygyny and promoted exogamous marriages.

We very earnestly enjoin upon every Christian man carefully to avoid illicit unions and duly to observe the laws of the church... And it must

¹⁷¹ Clunies Ross, "Concubinage", pp. 11, 21, see also chapter 2.

¹⁷² *Alfred*, 8, 10, 11, 18, 25, 29, *Die Gesetze* pp. 54–66. There is no mention of concubinage or the need for men to regularize their unions in the Alfredian laws. The primary concerns regarding sexual offences revolve around the compensation of male guardians and the, by now, standard prohibition against ravishing nuns.

¹⁷³ See Wormald, *English Law*, vol. i, pp. 449–465.

¹⁷⁴ "Ðaet is þonne ærest, þæt we ealle ænne God lufian 7 weorðian 7 ænne Cristendom georne healdan 7 ælcne hæðendom mid ealle aweorpan; 7 þæt we habbað ealle ægher ge mid worde ge mid wedde gefestnod, þæt we under anum cynedome ænne Cristendom healdan willað." Æthelred *VI* and *VI.1*, *Die Gesetze*, p. 236. Prohibitions against heathen practices are reiterated time and again in these codes, see Æthelred *V*34, p. 244, *VI* 1, p. 247, *VI*.7, p. 249, *VIII*.44, p. 268. The close association between the enforcement of ecclesiastical ideals and secular centralisation is further emphasised in Æthelred *X.1*, pp. 269–270.

never happen that a Christian man marries among his own kin within six degrees of relationship, that is, within the fourth generation, or with the widow of a man as nearly related to him as this, or a near relative of his first wife's... And a Christian man must never marry a professed nun or his godmother or a divorced woman, and he shall never have more wives than one, but he who seeks to observe God's law aright and to save his soul from hell-fire shall remain with the one as long as she lives.¹⁷⁵

In addition the laws attempted to curb the violent activities of the warrior fraternity and limit the practice of pillage, rapine and slaving-taking.¹⁷⁶

And it is the decree of our lord and his councillors, that Christian men who are innocent of crime shall not be sold out of the land, least of all to the heathen... And deceitful deeds and hateful injustices shall be strictly avoided, namely... foul adulteries, and horrible perjuries, and devilish deeds such as murders and homicides, thefts and robberies, covetousness and greed, gluttony and intemperance, frauds and various breaches of the law, violations of marriage and of holy orders... sacrilege, and misdeeds of many kinds... And if anyone injures a nun or does violence to a widow, he shall make amends to the utmost of his ability both towards church and state... For it is only by the suppression of injustice and the love of righteousness in matters both religious and secular that any improvement shall be obtained in the condition of the country.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ "7 we lerað swyðe geornlice þæt æghwile Christen man unriht hæmed georne forbuge 7 Christene lage rihtlice healde... 7 æfre ne geweorde þæt Christen man gewiðige in vi manna sibfære on his agenun cynne, þæt is binnan þam feorþan cneowe, ne on þæs lafe, þe swa neah wære on woroldcundre sibbe, ne on þæs wifes nydmagan þe he ær hæfde... Ne on gehalgodre ænigre nunnan, ne on his gefæderan, ne on æletan ænig Cristen man ne gewiðige æfre; ne na ma wifa þonne an hæbbe, ac beo be þære anre, þa hwile þe heo libbe, se þe wille Godes lage gyman mid rihte 7 wið hellebryne beorgan his sawle." *Æthelred VI*, 11, 12, 12.1, *Die Gesetze*, p. 250.

¹⁷⁶ This may have been an attempt to impose the 'Truce of God' upon English society. Indeed, Wormald has noted that Wulfstan had much in common with contemporary continental ecclesiastics who were writing about the Truce of God, *English Law*, p. 464.

¹⁷⁷ "7 ures hlaforðes gerædnes 7 his witena is, þæt man Cristene men 7 unforworhte of earde ne sylle, ne huru on hædene leode... 7 swiccollice dæda 7 laðlice unlaga ascunige man swyðe þæt is... fule forligra 7 egeslice mǣnswara 7 deoflice dæda on mordweorcum 7 on manslihtan, on stalan 7 on strudungan, on gitsungan 7 on gifernessan, on ofermettan 7 on oferfyllan, on swiccreftan 7 on mistlican lahbican, on æwbican 7 on hadbican, ... on cyrcénan 7 on mæniges cynnes misdædan... 7 gif hwa nunnan gewemme oþþe wyrdewan nydnæme, gebete þæt deope for Gode 7 for worolde... Forþam þurh þæt hit sceal on earde godian to ahte, þe man unriht alecege 7 rihtwisesne lufige for Gode 7 for worolde." *Æthelred V*, 2, VI, 28.2, 39 and 40.1, *Die Gesetze*, pp. 238, 254 and 256. Admittedly these laws were issued during a period of Viking incursions however Wulfstan was clearly aiming these judgements at his own people. Indeed, Wulfstan reiterated these judgements in a comprehensive set of law codes which he compiled during Cnut's reign *Cnut II*, 3, 4, 4a.1, 4a.2, 5.1, 6, 7, 13, 15a.1, *ibid.*, pp. 310–312, 316–319.

In addition, the laws provide us with evidence of an early attempt to enforce the reformers' codes regarding clerical celibacy upon the Anglo-Saxon priesthood. For example, *Æthelred V* 9 decrees that single priests should no longer be permitted to marry or maintain concubines.¹⁷⁸ This prohibition does not appear to have been particularly effective nevertheless it clearly promoted the ideal of chastity as the correct route through which to obtain spiritual and social prestige. It reveals the increasing willingness of the English ecclesiastical authorities to impose their norms upon rank and file churchmen. Married priests were now offered considerable social incentives to set aside their wives or concubines.

And we pray and admonish all priests to guard against incurring the wrath of God. They know full well that they have no right to marry. But he who will turn from marriage and observe celibacy shall obtain the favour of God, and in addition, as worldly honour, he shall enjoy the wergeld and the privileges of a thegn, both during his life and after his death... And he who will not do (what befits his order) shall impair both his ecclesiastical and his civil status.¹⁷⁹

We can not know how far these law codes were implemented or whether they were adhered to in any way, yet, they do provide us with a yardstick for measuring changing ideals and perceptions.¹⁸⁰ Their existence would seem to indicate that reforming ideals had been adopted within the ecclesiastical hierarchy of Anglo-Saxon England from a relatively early stage. Indeed, the ethical codes extant in *Æthelred V–X* appear to have been compiled under the direction of Archbishop Wulfstan of York during the closing years of *Æthelred's* reign.¹⁸¹ The legal judgements, quoted above, bear a remarkable resemblance to Wulfstan's homiletic injunctions and sermons and clearly identify the archbishop as an active and vigorous member of the reform movement.¹⁸² Wulfstan was

¹⁷⁸ *Æthelred V* 8, 9, 9.1, 9.2, *ibid.*, pp. 238–240.

¹⁷⁹ “7 ealle mæssepreostas we biddað 7 lærað þæt hi beorgan heom sielfum wið Godes yrrē... Fulgeorne hy witan þæt hi nagon mid rihte þurh hamedþinge wiſes gemanan... 7 se ðe þæs gewican wille 7 clennesse healdan, habbe he Godes miltse, 7 þer to eacan to worlde weorðscype þæt he sy þegenweres 7 þegenrihtes wyrðe, ge on life ge on legerē... 7 se þe þæt nelle, þæt his hade gebyrige, wænige his weorðscype ge for Gode ge for worlde.” *Ibid.* In addition, *Cnut II*, 74 Wulfstan also rules that no woman shall be forced to marry a man whom she dislikes, *ibid.* p. 360.

¹⁸⁰ Wormald, *English Law*, p. 481.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 197–203, 330–345.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 330–345, 449–465, see also J. Wilcox, “The Dissemination of Wulfstan's Homilies: The Wulfstan Tradition in the Eleventh-Century Vernacular” in C. Hicks (ed.), *England in the Eleventh Century* (Stamford, Lincs.: Paul Watkins, 1992), pp. 199–219, 201.

not alone in his commitment as other influential ecclesiastics (such as abbot Wulfsgie of Westminster and the monastic author Ælfric) were attempting to disseminate the ideals of reform into Anglo-Saxon society during this period. However, Wulfstan was clearly the most powerful of these English reformers: he was a close advisor of both King Æthelred and King Cnut and was heavily involved in the governmental workings of the royal court during the decades around the turn of the millennium.¹⁸³ In addition, Wulfstan's staunch belief in preaching and his memorable style of rhetoric have ensured his position in history as the preeminent figure within the early English reform movement.¹⁸⁴ Wulfstan appears to have used his political influence to promote the ascetic ideals of reform and his attempts to regularise the sexual behaviour of both the laity and the clergy within English society. He wished to reshape the moral landscape of Anglo-Saxon society in order to eradicate traditional behavioural practices such as concubinage which he equated with the pagan past.¹⁸⁵ Wulfstan clearly recognised that if the Church were to be successful in altering such deeply ingrained behavioural traits then it would have to lead by example.¹⁸⁶ This attitude is clearly illustrated in a tract from his *The Institutes of Polity*:

Every chastity befits men in orders, since they must forbid every unchastity to all other men. And if they act rightly, they must themselves most diligently set an example in every chastity. So it is very terrible that some of those who should preach righteousness to all Christian men, and moreover set an example, have become an example for perdition rather than for benefit. That is, those adulterers who through holy orders have entered into ecclesiastical marriage and afterwards violated it. It is allowed to no minister of the altar that he take a wife; but it is forbidden to each. Nevertheless there are now all too many who commit, and have committed, adultery. But for the love of God, I pray and moreover strictly command that they desist from this. To a layman every woman is forbidden except his legitimate spouse; some of those in orders are so deceived by the Devil that they take a wife wrongfully and ruin themselves through the adultery in which they dwell... The Church is the priest's spouse, and

¹⁸³ Wormald, *English Law*, pp. 449–465.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., see also Wilcox, “Dissemination”.

¹⁸⁵ Patrick Wormald has convincingly argued that “Wulfstan’s books were blueprints for a people of God”, see Wormald, “Wulfstan”, p. 208.

¹⁸⁶ “If the clergy wished to be considered spiritually better than the laity, then they had to forgo the sex that the laity allowed themselves”, Wertheimer, “Children of Disorder”, p. 395.

he has not rightly any other; for neither a wife nor the warfare of this world in any way befits a priest...¹⁸⁷

In his *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* Wulfstan also voiced his concerns about the effects which traditional modes of behaviour were having upon the moral welfare of the secular population.¹⁸⁸ In particular, he appears to have been concerned about the serious temptation to sin that was posed by the sexually accessible nature of slave women.

And it is shameful to speak of what has too commonly happened, and it is dreadful to know what many often do, who practise that wretchedness that they club together and buy one woman in common as a joint purchase, and with the one commit filth one after another and each after the other just like dogs who do not care about filth; and then sell for a price out of the land into the power of enemies the creature of God and his own purchase that he dearly bought.¹⁸⁹

This homily is particularly significant because it clearly reflects the ambivalent attitude of the ecclesiastical hierarchy towards the institution of slavery. Whilst Wulfstan clearly recognised the humanity of the slave woman his primary concern appears to have been her owners' fornication.¹⁹⁰ In Wulfstan's mind concerns regarding the morally corrupting effects of slave ownership and the loss of souls from the English

¹⁸⁷ "Gehadedum mannum gebyred ælc clennes, forðam þe hi sculon eallum oðrum mannum ælc unclennesse forbeodan. And ælc clennesse, gif hi riht doð, hi sculon be heom sylfum geornost gebysnian. Þonne is hit sweþe egeslic, þæt ða þe sceoldan eallum cristenum mannum riht bodian and eac wel bysnian, þæt hi syn sume gewordenen bysen to forweyrde swyðor þonne to þearfe. Þæt syndon þa æwbrecan, þe purh healicne hād ciricæwe underfengan and syððan þæt abræcan. Nis nanum weofod þene alyfed, þæt he wifian mote, ac is ælcum forboden. Nu is þeah þera ealles to fela þe þone æwbryce wyrcað and geworht habbað. Ac ic bidde for Godes lufan and eac eornostlice beode, þæt man þæs geswice. Læwedum men is ælc wif forboden, butan his rihtæwe; gehadode syndon sume swa purh deofol beswicene, þæt hi wifiað on unriht and forweyrcað hi sylfe purh done æwbryce, þe hi on wuniað... cirice is sacerdos æwe. Nah he mid rihte ænige oðre; forðam ne gebirað sacerdan nan ðinge, naðor ne to wife ne to worldwige", *Die "Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical"*, K. Jost (ed.) (Bern: Francke, 1959), pp. 110–114, translation by Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, p. 133.

¹⁸⁸ See chapter 2.

¹⁸⁹ "And scandlic is to specenne þæt geworden is to wide 7 egeslic is to witanne þæt oft doð to manega þe dreogað þa yrmþe, þæt sceotað togædere 7 ane cwenan gemænum ceape biggað gemæne, 7 wið þa ane fylpe adreogað, an after anum 7 ælc æfter oðrum, hundum gelicost þe for fylpe ne scrifað, 7 syððan wið worde syllað of lande feondum to gewealde Godes gesceafte 7 his agenne ceap þe he deore gebohte." *SLAA*, pp. 57–58, translation from Swanton, *ASP*, p. 119.

¹⁹⁰ Wulfstan's concerns in this respect are also illustrated by an code in *Cnut II* which states "If a married man commits adultery with his own slave, he shall lose her and make amends for himself both to God and to men." ("Gif wiðfæst wer hine forlicgne be his agenre wylne, þolige þere 7 bete for hine sylfne wið God 7 wið men."), *Die Gesetze*, p. 348.

Christian flock appear to have taken striking precedence over genuine compassion for the welfare of the slave.

Patrick Wormald has argued that following Cnut's capture of the throne of England Wulfstan became both "a prophet and engineer for social reconstruction."¹⁹¹ In addition, Wilcox has remarked that Wulfstan "...was a significant and influential voice for preaching in England throughout the eleventh century."¹⁹² Wulfstan's intellectual achievements were manifold and both of these arguments are undoubtedly valid. However, it is more difficult to ascertain whether Wulfstan's preaching had any real impact upon the behavioural norms of the clergy or the laity during his own lifetime. The archbishop certainly wielded considerable power and influence and received staunch support from significant individuals in both the secular and ecclesiastical hierarchy. Nevertheless, his attempts at enforcing clerical celibacy were largely unsuccessful and his efforts to instil the rule of monogamy into the secular psyche even less so.¹⁹³ This is evident from the behaviour of King Cnut who continued to maintain his concubine, Ælgifu of Northampton, alongside his legitimate wife, Emma. Cnut did this even though it placed him in direct contravention of the law codes that Wulfstan had promulgated in his name stating that a Christian man

...shall never commit adultery anywhere...And he shall have no more wives than one, and that shall be his wedded wife...And if anyone has a lawful wife and also a concubine, no priest shall perform for him any of the offices which must be performed for a Christian man.¹⁹⁴

Cnut's behaviour, in this respect, is all the more surprising when we consider that he was striving to promote a pious and Christian self-image following his acquisition of the English throne.¹⁹⁵ We can only deduce, then, that the Danish-born king would have understood that the majority of his English subjects regarded such behaviour to be prestigious and power-affirming rather than sacrilegious and polluting. Cnut's disregard for Archbishop Wulfstan's ideological sentiments appears to be

¹⁹¹ Wormald, "Wulfstan", p. 207.

¹⁹² Wilcox, "Dissemination", p. 219.

¹⁹³ See notes 214, 219, below.

¹⁹⁴ "...ne ænige forligru ahwar ne begange...ne na má wífa þonne an hæbbe 7 þæt beo his beweddode wif...7 se ðe hæbbe rihtwif 7 eac cífesse, ne do him nan preost nan þera gerihta, þe man Cristenum men don sceal." *Cnut I*, 7.2, 7.3 and *Cnut II* 54.1, *Die Gesetze*, pp. 290, 348. See also, M.K. Lawson, *Cnut, The Danes in England in the Early Eleventh Century* (London: Longman, 1993), pp. 131–132.

¹⁹⁵ Lawson, *Cnut*, pp. 131–138.

indicative of how deeply ingrained the practice of resource polygyny was in Anglo-Saxon society. This was unlikely to alter whilst kings continued to express their power in a traditional manner. Yet, within a few decades of Wulfstan's death a king was to ascend the throne of England who would seemingly aspire to the very ascetic ideal which Wulfstan had so forcefully expounded. That king was Edward, the eldest son of Æthelred, who had been forced into exile as a child following his father's defeat and expulsion at the hands of Cnut.

Edward ascended the throne of England in 1042 following nearly a decade of violent succession disputes that had been directly caused by Cnut's practice of resource polygyny.¹⁹⁶ Edward's own brother, Alfred, had fallen victim in one of these disputes and had met a particularly grisly end at the hands of one of his rival's supporters.¹⁹⁷ This bitter internecine feuding together with Edward's upbringing at the court of his uncle, Robert, the duke of Normandy, appears to have imbued Edward with a disdain for traditional Anglo-Saxon expressions of power through virility. In January 1045 Edward married his only wife, Edith, the daughter of Godwine, the powerful earl of Wessex. The medieval sources' portrayal of this marriage as a faithful and monogamous union is almost legendary. This characterisation is based predominantly upon one text, the *Vita Ædwardi Regis*, which was written shortly after Edward's death (in around 1065–1067).¹⁹⁸ The author of the *Vita* clearly intended to portray Edward as a king who adhered to the ascetic values of the reform movement. The author comments of Edward's queen, Edith:

Christ had indeed prepared her for His beloved Edward, kindling in her from very childhood the love of chastity, the hatred of vice, and the desire of virtue. Such a bride—whose every virtue it is completely beyond our ability to describe—was therefore entirely suitable for this great king.¹⁹⁹

Similarly, the *Vita* portrayed Edward as a pious and religious man whose power stemmed from his devotion to chastity.

¹⁹⁶ See P. Stafford, *Unification and Conquest* (London: Edward Arnold, 1989), pp. 77–82.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *The Life of King Edward who rests at Westminster*, F. Barlow (ed. and trans.) (2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. xxix–xxxiii, see also F. Barlow, *Edward the Confessor* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1970), p. 82.

¹⁹⁹ “*Hanc dilecto suo preparauerat Christus Edwardo, inspirans ei ab ipsa infancia castitatis amorem, odium uiciorum, uirtutis affectum. Decebat enim tantum regem talis sponsa, cuius singula describere merita nequaquam ex nostra sufficimus copia.*” *VE*, pp. 22–23.

He preserved with holy chastity the dignity of his consecration, and lived his whole life dedicated to God in true innocence. God approved this as an acceptable burnt offering, and with profound love made him dear to men and worshipful among the citizens of heaven.²⁰⁰

It seems unlikely that the portrayal of Edward as a pious and gentle king is an accurate representation of his true character.²⁰¹ Yet, despite this, there is little evidence to suggest that Edward participated in any adulterous liaisons or that he maintained any concubines.²⁰² Edward and Edith's union was certainly a childless one and this appears to have contributed significantly towards the subsequent construction of his ascetic image. Edward was, therefore, considered to be an exceptional king because he was unwilling or unable to express his power through the traditional idiom of virility. If Edward had been ruling several centuries earlier then this might have presented a serious handicap to his authority. By the middle of the eleventh century, however, the cultural climate was beginning to alter and Edward became a focus for the reforming ideals that had been expounded by men like Archbishop Wulfstan of York. Following his death the ecclesiastical scholars came to regard Edward as a model for subsequent kings and for secular society in general.²⁰³ The main justification given for Edward's eventual canonisation by Pope Alexander III in February 1161 was the king's pursuit of a chaste lifestyle.²⁰⁴ The reason given for Edward's elevation

²⁰⁰ "*Cuius consecrationis dignitatem sancta conseruans castimonia, omnem uitam agebat deo dicatam in uera innocentia. Quam deus in holocaustum acceptionis approbans, ex affectu intimo eum fecit carum hominibus, et uenerabilem cum supernis ciuibus.*" Ibid., pp. 92–93.

²⁰¹ Barlow, *Confessor*, pp. 81–95.

²⁰² Ibid., 84–85. William of Malmesbury relates rumours that Queen Edith had been suspected of adultery both during and after her marriage to Edward. However, William asserts that no such rumours questioned Edward's fidelity or chastity, *GRA*, vol. ii, p. 353. Indeed, it is possible that Edward's adherence to the reformers' rule of monogamy may well have been prompted by his mother's apparent eagerness to enter Cnut's bed following Æthelred's death and her subsequent complicity in his brother, Alfred's death. Although, as already noted Queen Emma may have initially had little choice in becoming Cnut's bride, see chapter 3.

²⁰³ For example, William of Malmesbury described Edward as a paragon of royal behaviour and etiquette noting that he remained "untouched by royal luxury" (*regalis luxu immunis*), for his full description see *GRA*, pp. 404–405. Similarly, John of Worcester regarded the Confessor as "The glory of the English, the peaceable King Edward." (*Anglorum decus, pacificus rex Edwardus.*), *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, R.R. Darlington and P. McGurk (eds. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), vol. ii, pp. 598–599. See also Barlow, *Confessor*, p. 279.

²⁰⁴ See the letter written by Roger, archbishop of York petitioning Pope Alexander to canonise Edward in Barlow, *Confessor*, Appendix D, pp. 312–313, see also pp. 315–324 for examples of other similar letters and also pp. 82, 279–280.

into sainthood was, therefore, a direct inversion of the reason given for the canonisation of *ancillae dei* such as St. Brigit and St. Margaret of Antioch. Brigit and Margaret had become saints primarily because they had resisted the sexually accessible nature of their slave status and accepted mutilation or death rather than sexual corruption. The Confessor, on the other hand, proved his sanctity because he resisted the unlimited sexual temptation that his status afforded him and chose a life of chastity.

The *Vita Ædwardi*'s portrayal of Edward the Confessor's monogamous lifestyle would suggest that English attitudes towards the traditional practices of concubinage and female accumulation were beginning to alter during the eleventh century. Yet, the *Vita* cannot be regarded as representative of the attitudes of the English secular elite in this period as it was composed by a Flemish author writing in an ascetic monastic milieu.²⁰⁵ Even if we accept that this portrayal was an accurate representation of Edward's behavioural norms, he was probably far from representative of Anglo-Saxon secular society in general.²⁰⁶ Indeed, Edward was very much a product of Norman society. His attitudes had been shaped within the cultural world of Northern France, which appears to have been slightly more receptive towards the ideals of the ecclesiastical reformers.²⁰⁷ By contrast, in Anglo-Saxon England the ideals of the reform movement were frequently ignored because they challenged the traditional value systems of secular society. When attempts were made to impose these revised norms they were often violently resisted, even within the ecclesiastical communities. The author of the late tenth-century tract *Vita Sancti Æthelwoldi* relates that, following his consecration as bishop at Winchester in 963, the reformer, Æthelwold, discovered that the cathedral canons were

...involved in wicked and scandalous behaviour, victims of pride, insolence, and riotous living to such a degree that some of them did not think fit to celebrate mass in due order. They married wives illicitly, divorced them, and took others; they were constantly given to gourmandising and drunkenness. The holy man Æthelwold would not tolerate it. With permission

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 257.

²⁰⁶ See chapter 2.

²⁰⁷ See argument regarding William the Conqueror, below.

from King Edgar he lost no time in expelling from the monastery such detestable blasphemers against God.²⁰⁸

Following his expulsion of these unruly canons the *Vita* relates that Æthelwold imposed the stern rule of “regular life” (*regularis uitæ*) upon Westminster Abbey.²⁰⁹ However, Æthelwold’s reforming zeal does not appear to have been shared by many of the members of his flock who subsequently attempted to murder their bishop with poison so that upon his death they could “...drive away the slaves of God and regroup to form a new assembly, free to indulge their former shameful practices.”²¹⁰

Yet, in spite of the treachery of his monks the *Vita* relates that Æthelwold’s unshakeable faith enabled him to resist the effects of the poison and the plot failed.²¹¹ Furthermore, if the *Laws of Æthelred* can be taken to be reflective of the reformers’ genuine concerns then it appears that the practice of resource polygyny was common amongst the ecclesiastical communities of England during the early years of the eleventh century. In the law code *Æthelred, VI, 5.2* Archbishop Wulfstan of York complained that certain priests and servants of God were

...guilty of a worse practice in having two or more (wives), and others, although they forsake their former wives, afterwards take others while these are still alive—a thing which is unfitting for any Christian man to do.²¹²

Such practices appear to have proved extremely difficult to eradicate and they were certainly still widespread during the Confessor’s reign. Indeed, in the final quarter of the eleventh century the ecclesiastical hierarchy remained engaged in a bitter struggle to impose the rule

²⁰⁸ “...canonici nefandis scelerum moribus implicati, elatione et insolentia atque luxuria praeuerti, adeo ut nonnulli illorum dedignarentur missas suo ordine celebrare, repudiantes uxores quas inlicitè duxerant et alias accipientes, gulae et ebrietati iugiter dediti. Quad minime ferens sanctus uir Ætheluuoldus, data licentia a rege Eadgaro, expulit citissime detestandos blasphematores Dei de monasterio.” Wulfstan of Winchester’s *Vita Sancti Æthelwoldi, The Life of St. Æthelwold*, M. Lapidge and M. Winterbottom (eds. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), pp. 30–31. While it is possible that some of these claims were exaggerated the concerns regarding clerical concubines and wives are clearly evident.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 34–35.

²¹⁰ “...quatinus illo extincto seruos Dei expellerent, rursumque in unum congregati libere pristinis frui potuissent flagitiis.” Ibid., pp. 34–35.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² “Ac hit is þe weyrse þe sume habbað twa oððe ma, 7 sum, þe he forlæte þa he ær hæfde, he be lifienðe þære eft opere nimað, swa ænigan Cristenan mæn ne gedafenað to donne.” *Æthelred VI 5.2, Die Gesetze*, p. 248, see also *Cnut I, 6a.1–3, 7.3* and *Cnut II, 50.1, 54.1*, pp. 288–290, 346–348.

of celibacy upon the reluctant English clergy.²¹³ Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester appears to have encountered stiff resistance whilst attempting to enforce the ideals of the reform movement upon his flock during this period. William of Malmesbury, the twelfth-century author of Wulfstan's *Vita*, relates that many of the bishop's clerics had preferred to forfeit their position within the Church rather than give up their wives and concubines. He comments that the bishop

...abhorred the disgrace of lewdness, favouring continence in all, and especially men in holy orders. If he learned of anyone dedicated to chastity, he took him into his circle and loved him like a son. He brought all married priests under one edict, proclaiming that they should renounce either their sexual desires or their churches. If they loved chastity, they might remain with honour; or if slaves to sensuality, they should leave in disgrace. And there were quite a few who would prefer to forego their churches rather than their little women. Some of them turned into starving vagabonds; others sought a position elsewhere and, eventually, finding patronage were not destitute. The *few* who took the wiser course renounced their seducers and grew old with honour...²¹⁴

This interesting extract reinforces several important points. William of Malmesbury believed that Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester had associated chastity with power just as his namesake, Archbishop Wulfstan of York, had done at the turn of the eleventh century.²¹⁵ William felt that those clerics who had adhered to the reformers' rule of chastity and put away their wives or concubines had retained both their honour and their status. On the other hand, he felt that those men who had refused to follow Wulfstan's stern ascetic code had lost their power

²¹³ In 1076 Archbishop Lanfranc issued decrees forbidding clerics to marry after they had been ordained, he also ordered existing canons to give up their wives. This policy was also vigorously pursued under Archbishop Anselm during the early years of the twelfth century. Yet, despite these attempts to impose the reformers' codes upon the English clergy clerical wives and concubines continued to be a widespread phenomenon in England during the first half of the twelfth century. See Barstow, *Married Priests*, pp. 87–96 and Brooke, "Gregorian", p. 51.

²¹⁴ "*Labem impudicie oderat, integritati fauebat in omnibus, et maxime sacri ordinis hominibus. Quorum si quempiam castitati comperisset deditum; familiarium eum parciū facere, et ut filium diligere. Uxoratos presbiteros omnes uno conuenit edicto; aut libidini aut ecclesie renuntiandum pronuntians. Si castimoniam amarent; manerent cum gratia; si uoluptati seruirent; exirent cum iniuria. Fueruntque non nulli; qui ecclesie quam mulierculis carere mallent. Quorum aliquos uagabundos fames absumpsit; aliquos res familiaris aliunde quesita, in extremum tutata, non destituit. Pauci quos sanior regebat ratio; abdicatis illicitis, preclaro in ecclesie suis consensuere otio.*" *VWWM*, p. 53, translation from Swanton, *TLE*, p. 136.

²¹⁵ See note 179, above.

and honour becoming “slaves to sensuality” (*uoluptati seruirent*).²¹⁶ Yet, although Wulfstan’s clerics clearly had a great deal to lose by maintaining their illicit unions, it appears that many of them still refused to relinquish traditional norms of behaviour. William of Malmesbury makes it clear that whilst some men became destitute as a result of this refusal, others were still able to find patronage within establishments that presumably did not adhere so strictly to the reformers’ codes of behaviour. The unwillingness of the English clergy to conform to the reformers’ codes of sexual behaviour is also reported by twelfth-century monastic historian Orderic Vitalis. Orderic complained that this lack of English discipline “...affected clergy and laity alike, and inclined both sexes to every kind of lust.”²¹⁷

In the face of such evidence then one is forced to seriously question the Church’s ability to enforce its directives regarding sexual conduct upon the Anglo-Saxon elite.²¹⁸ Despite centuries of strenuous preaching and the enactment of prohibitive legislation the ecclesiastical authorities of England appear to have failed to impose the ascetic ideals of the reform movement upon the members of its own flock. The reluctance of even the English clergy to accept the codes of behaviour expounded by the reformers, especially in relation to clerical marriage and concubinage, reveals the extreme cultural significance of traditional Anglo-Saxon systems of patriarchy. Whilst the ecclesiastical authorities failed to impose their norms upon the members of their own communities then there could be little hope that these norms would be adhered to amongst the secular population. William of Malmesbury viewed this native resistance to the forces of reform as an indication that the Anglo-Saxon Church and the English population in general, had become corrupt and tainted with sin. His view, which has been reiterated by many modern historians, focussed particularly upon the violence, intemperance and sexual corruption of the Anglo-Saxon

²¹⁶ This was a clear reversal of traditional values which regarded virility as prestigious and power affirming, *VWWM*, p. 53.

²¹⁷ “*Huiusmodi dissolutio clericos et laicos relaxauerat et utrunque sexum ad omnem lasciuam inclinauerat.*” Orderic was an English monk writing in the Norman monastery of St. Evroult during the second decade of the twelfth century. He also commented that, prior to the Norman Conquest, English monks had been difficult to differentiate from laymen and had “...indulged in feasting and private property and countless foul transgressions” (“...dediti ganæ, peculiis, innumeris fœdisque præuaricationibus.”), *OV*, vol. ii, pp. 246–249.

²¹⁸ Clunies Ross, “Concubinage”, p. 28. See also Wertheimer, “Children of Disorder”, p. 388.

people. William argued that although the English had, initially, been a pious race they had lapsed into pre-Christian ways and this was the reason for their defeat at the hands of the more pious Normans. William states that in Anglo-Saxon England

...zeal both for learning and for religion cooled as time went on, not many years before the coming of the Normans...Monks, with their finely-woven garments and their indiscriminating diet, made nonsense of their Rule. The nobles abandoned to gluttony and lechery, never went to church of a morning as a Christian should; but in his chamber, in his wife's embrace, a man would lend a careless ear to some priest galloping through the solemn words of matins and the mass...One practice in particular was perfectly inhuman: many of them got their own slave-girls (*ancillas*) with child and, when they had sated their lust on the girls sold them to a public brothel or to the service in a foreign country. Drinking in company was a universal practice...There followed the vices that keep company with drunkenness, and made them like women (*quae uirorum animos effeminant*). As a result there was more rashness and headlong fury than military skill in their conflict with William, so that in one battle and a very easy one they abandoned themselves and their country to slavery (*seruituti*).²¹⁹

William recognised, then, that overt expressions of virility had been regarded as both acceptable and prestigious in Anglo-Saxon England. It is certainly significant that, in order to emphasise this point, he cited the prevalent sexual exploitation of slave women prior to the Norman Conquest. The twelfth-century monk clearly regarded such behaviour to be both abhorrent, uncivilised and in direct contravention to his reform-minded sensibilities. He, therefore, concluded that this sinful behaviour had seriously diminished the prowess of the Anglo-Saxon warrior and ultimately led to their defeat and 'enslavement' at the battle of Hastings. William also implies that this sort of 'uncivilised' behaviour was a characteristic belonging to the Anglo-Saxon past and was no

²¹⁹ "Veruntamen litterarum et religionis studia aetate procedente obsoleuerunt, non paucis ante aduentum Normannorum annis... Monachi subtilibus indumentis et indifferenti genere ciborum regulam ludificabant. Optimates gulae et ueneri dediti aecclesiam more Christiano mane non adibant, sed in cubiculo et inter uxorios amplexus matutinarum sollemnia et missarum a festinante presbitero auribus tantum libabant... Illud erat a natura abhorrens, quod multi ancillas suas ex se grauidas, ubi libidini satisfacissent, aut ad publicum prostibulum aut ad externum obsequium uenditabant. Potabatur in commune ab omnibus... Sequebantur uitia ebrietatis sotia, quae uirorum animos effeminant. Hinc factum est ut, magis temeritate et furore precipiti quam scientia militari Willelmo congressi, uno prelio et ipso perfacili seruituti se patriamque pessumdederint", *GRA*, vol. ii, pp. 458–459.

longer considered to be a problem in his own day.²²⁰ Indeed, William clearly felt that the imposition of the Norman regime following the Conquest had facilitated an improvement in the moral conduct of the English and helped to eradicate the bad habits that they had inherited from their pre-Christian past.²²¹ His view, in this respect, was certainly rather optimistic or even naïve, indeed, traditional modes of behaviour undoubtedly continued after the Conquest. Nevertheless, his perception of the situation is significant because it is symptomatic of a shift in attitudes amongst the elite who increasingly attempted to disguise or cloak such behaviour, rather than to boast about it, in order to project a more pious and chaste (or at least monogamous) self-image. William's attitude, then, which is reflected in the writings of other twelfth-century English scholars, suggests that there had been a subtle yet significant change in the cultural outlook of English society in the decades following the Conquest.²²² This revised outlook appears to have been characterised by a particular aversion to certain traditional practices namely: concubinage/related internecine conflicts, rapacious warrior behaviour/slave taking and marriage within the prohibitive degrees of kinship.²²³ In order to understand how such a fundamental change in attitudes had occurred we must examine the cultural implications of the Norman invasion in more detail.

²²⁰ Similarly, Orderic Vitalis, commented that the English had been inclined towards lustful behavior; see above. He also felt that their excessive behaviour meant that the "shallowness and flabbiness of the people made them all prone to crime...canonical discipline was not restored until the time of the Normans." (*"leuitas et mollicies gentis in flagitium quenquam facile impellebat...et canonicus rigor usque ad Normannorum tempore reparatus non est."*) *OV*, vol. ii, pp. 247–249.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, see also *GRA*, vol. ii, pp. 458–461.

²²² J. Gillingham, "1066 and the Introduction of Chivalry into England" in G. Garnett and J. Hudson (eds.), *Law and Government in Medieval England and Normandy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 31–55, 53–55. J. Gillingham, "Henry of Huntingdon and the Twelfth Century Revival of the English Nation" in S. Forde et al. (eds.), *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages* (Leeds: University of Leeds School of English, 1995), pp. 75–101, 78–79.

²²³ The author of the mid-twelfth century *Gesta Stephani* complained that the English people had frequently provoked God's wrath because their rulers had "wallowed without discrimination and without repentance in every kind of illicit sexual intercourse...it was no wonder if England was tormented by so much internecine strife..." (*"...sed et laxius et remissius in omnem illiciti amplexus coitum, in omnem edendi et bibendi superfluum ructum...in si tot Anglia discordie dissensionibus..."*) *Gesta Stephani*, K.R. Potter and R.H.C. Davis (eds. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 86–87.

Reforming the English: The Impact of the Norman Conquest

Edward the Confessor's apparent adherence to the ideals of the reform movement suggests that influential elements within Norman society (in which he was of course raised) had become imbued with a reforming zeal during the first half of the eleventh century. This hypothesis appears to receive support from the opinions of twelfth-century writers such as William of Malmesbury.²²⁴ Nevertheless, it is generally quite difficult to discern any marked differences between the cultural worlds of the Norman and English elite. The personal background of William the Conqueror, perhaps, illustrates this best of all. William was the illegitimate offspring of a sexual liaison between his father, Duke Robert the Magnificent, and a concubine named Herleva.²²⁵ The Conqueror was therefore the product of traditional patriarchal behaviour and his conception directly contravened the rigorous behavioural codes expounded by the ecclesiastical reformers. In addition to his illicit conception, William also went on to marry within the prohibited degrees of kinship. His bride, Mathilda of Flanders, appears to have been a distant cousin yet this marriage went ahead in spite of the protestations of the papal council of Rheims in 1049.²²⁶ In many ways, then, William seems to have personified everything that the reformers abhorred about the behaviour of the secular elite. His ascendancy within the ducal household of Normandy would suggest that the values and codes of the reform movement had barely impacted upon Norman secular society. Furthermore, during the eleventh century the Norman ecclesiastical authorities appear to have encountered bitter opposition towards their reform efforts from within their own flock. For example, in 1072 a violent confrontation arose following an attempt by Archbishop John of Rouen to impose reforming canons upon the members of his clergy. These canons had ordered the excommunication of any priest who strayed from

²²⁴ See note 219 above.

²²⁵ D. Bates, *William the Conqueror* (London: Philip, 1989), pp. 21–22. Bates suggests that it was usual for a Norman noble to have a wife and also a long-term mistress. Indeed, it appears likely that Herleva was not Robert's only concubine as the parentage of Adelaide, the Conqueror's sister, is also uncertain, see *OV*, vol. ii, pp. 264–265, note 3. See also E. Van Houts, "The Origins of Herleva, Mother of William the Conqueror", *EHR*, 101, 1986, pp. 399–404.

²²⁶ See *GRA*, vol. ii, pp. 494–495, *GND*, vol. ii, pp. 146–147, 156. For a full discussion of William and Mathilda's alleged blood ties see D.C. Douglas, *William the Conqueror* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1983, 1st edn. 1964), pp. 75–80 and Appendix C, pp. 391–395 and also Bates, *Conqueror*, pp. 31–32.

the righteous path of celibacy. They aroused such vehement antipathy that John was lynched by his own followers and only narrowly escaped with his life.²²⁷ The violent nature of this resistance suggests that the Norman reformers had been as ineffective as their English counterparts in attempting to impose their revised codes of behaviour. This is borne out by the enduring power of ecclesiastical dynasties within the Norman Church. Moreover, the hereditary transmission of ecclesiastical offices continued to be commonplace throughout the eleventh century.²²⁸

Given Duke William's personal background and the apparent resistance to reform within the Norman Church during his rule, then it would seem unlikely that he would have cultivated an image as a pious champion of the Church. Yet, this was indeed how many contemporary medieval writers chose to portray him. Archbishop Thomas of York (1070–1100) described the Conqueror as "...a holy and devout worshipper of the Christian religion."²²⁹ Similarly, the eleventh-century Norman chronicler William of Jumièges commented that Duke William "...while in the prime of his flowering youth, began to devote himself wholeheartedly to the worship of God."²³⁰

There is some evidence to suggest that William did make attempts to further the aims of the reform movement in both Normandy and England.²³¹ Orderic Vitalis clearly regarded William as a staunch promoter of reform and comments that

²²⁷ *OV*, vol. ii, pp. 200–201. See also Barstow, *Married Priests*, pp. 86–87. For continuing opposition and antipathy to reform ideals from within the Norman Church see Thibodeaux, "Man of the Church", pp. 380–399.

²²⁸ See Barstow, for examples, *Married Priests*, pp. 89–90.

²²⁹ "*Religionem christianam... sanctissime et cum summa pietate coluit.*" This epitaph is accurately repeated by Orderic Vitalis in *GND*, p. 189 and note 7.

²³⁰ "...iam flore uernans gratissime iuuentutis, cultum Dei cepit ultroneo corde amplecti imperitorum quoque contubernia...", *ibid.*, pp. 120–121. Not surprisingly the Conqueror's panegyrist, William of Poitiers took a similar line noting that the duke "received and honoured with seemingly reverence the host of salvation, the blood of our Lord, holding strong faith to that which true doctrine has ordained." ("*Sumebat et honorabat condecenti reuerentia hostiam salutarem, dominicum sanguinem; sincera fide tenens quod uera doctrina praeceperat.*") *Gesta Guillelmi*, R.H.C. Davis and M. Chibnall (eds. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 80–81, see also pages 78–99, 81–83. William's pious image is further supported, albeit with some reservations, by Orderic Vitalis. Orderic, who was writing some decades after William's death generally takes a more critical view of the Conqueror; however, he still felt obliged to comment that the Churches built by William "...stand as noble witnesses to his piety and generosity in the service of God..." ("*...deuotionis eius et largitatis in Dei cultu laudabile testimonium asserunt...*") *OV*, vol. ii, pp. 290–291, see also 249.

²³¹ See below.

King William was justly renowned for his reforming zeal; in particular he always loved true religion in churchmen for on this the peace and prosperity of the world depend. There is evidence of this in the reputation he enjoyed everywhere, and unquestionable proof in the works he performed.²³²

Aside from his 'illegal' union with Mathilda of Flanders, the duke appears to have cultivated a friendly relationship with the reforming papacy.²³³ This relationship was clearly affirmed when in 1066 Pope Alexander II (1061–1073) sanctioned William's English enterprise.²³⁴ One of the primary motivations for Alexander's support of this war against a Christian people appears to have been the papacy's intense desire to impose reform upon the English Church.²³⁵ William, on the other hand, required the support of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in order to legitimise his struggle for the English throne. The duke appears to have shrewdly understood that by allying himself with the reform movement he could significantly enhance his prestige and moral standing. Indeed, the ideology of the reform movement appears to have provided the Conqueror with the means to reinforce his power and hegemony in both the duchy of Normandy and his newly acquired kingdom.

Following the conquest of England Pope Alexander II expectantly regarded William as a promoter of the cause of reform. In a letter written to William in October 1071 Alexander praised the king in the following manner:

We learn at this time of your outstanding reputation for piety among the rulers and princes of the world and we receive unmistakable evidence of your support for the Church: you do battle against the forces of simoniacal

²³² "*Multimode honestatis studio in multis rex Guillelmus laudabilis claruit maximeque in ministris Dei ueram religionem cui pax interdum et prosperitas mundi famulatur semper amauit. Hoc fama multiplex adtestatur hoc operum exhibitione certissime comprobatur.*" *OV*, vol. ii, pp. 238–239. I feel that Chibnall's interpretation of "*maximeque in ministris Dei ueram religionem*" as "reforming zeal" is justified given the context, Orderic's other comments regarding the king's piety and also the similar attitudes that are extant in other contemporary sources.

²³³ Bates, *Conqueror*, p. 32.

²³⁴ See *GG*, pp. 104–105, *OV*, vol. ii, pp. 142–143. There has been some debate over whether the pontificate issued William with a papal banner sanctioning a holy war against the English. However, the fact that William did receive the general support of the papacy for his expedition is not in dispute. See A.M. Gill, "Pope Alexander II, William II of Normandy and the *Vexillum Sancti Petri*", unpublished paper delivered to the St.Martin's Conference, June 2001, Nottingham University and C. Morton, "Pope Alexander II and the Norman Conquest", *Latomus, Revue D'Etudes Latines*, 34, 1975, pp. 362–382.

²³⁵ Gill, "Pope Alexander", p. 2.

heresy and you defend the freedom of catholic rites and customs. But since the crown of reward is promised not to those who begin well but those who are proven at the end, we urge your excellency zealously to preserve in your most Christian devotion.²³⁶

Alexander's lecturing tone may well have been prompted by the Conqueror's retention of the excommunicated Englishman, Stigand, as archbishop of Canterbury until 1070. Yet, this was undoubtedly an act of political expediency on William's part and the new king soon began to promote intellectual reformers within the English ecclesiastical hierarchy. This not only enhanced William's standing in the eyes of the Church but, also, provided a pretext for the replacement of English officials with his own candidates from Normandy. However, William did retain the services of certain reform-minded Englishmen such as Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester, who continued to be a close adviser of the king. In addition, William's appointment of Lanfranc to the see of Canterbury was undoubtedly motivated as much by the churchman's reforming credentials as it was by his personal connections to the Conqueror. Both Archbishop Lanfranc and Wulfstan of Worcester actively sought to enforce the codes of clerical celibacy and secular monogamy, both encouraged peace and the rule of law and promoted ecclesiastical independence and, coincidentally, both men sought to restrict concubinage and slaving activity.²³⁷ In addition to these English appointments the Conqueror appears to have bolstered attempts to reform the clergy within the duchy of Normandy albeit with an element of self-interest. In 1080 William presided over the Council of Lillebonne and chastised his bishops for not enforcing the papal decrees on clerical celibacy.²³⁸ He, therefore, ordered the establishment of mixed secular and ecclesiastical courts in which to try those clerics accused of maintaining concubines. He justified this, undoubtedly prestigious and lucrative enterprise, by pointing out that the bishops

²³⁶ "...tamen inter mundi rectores et principes egregiam uestrae religionis famam intelligimus, et quantam honoris sanctae aeclesiae tum simoniace haeresis uires opprimendo tum catholicae libertatis usus et officia confirmando uestra uirtus impendat non dubia relatione cognoscimus. Sed quoniam non iis qui bona demonstrant initia sed in fine probatis premium et corona promittitur, excellentiam uestram plena dilectione monemus ut in studio christianissimae deuotionis uestrae persistatis." *Letters of Lanfranc*, H. Clover and M. Gibson (eds. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), letter 7, pp. 60–61.

²³⁷ See *LoL*, pp. 8, 67–69, 71–73, 107 and *TLL*, pp. 122, 126, see also Pelteret, *Slavery*, pp. 77–78 and E. Mason, *St. Wulfstan of Worcester 1008–1095* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 64, 113, 116.

²³⁸ Barstow, *Married Priests*, pp. 88–89.

had failed to correct the conduct of their own flocks.²³⁹ Evidently the Conqueror felt confident that his reforming zeal would be perceived to be greater than that of his episcopal officials.

William also appears to have adhered to the reformers' norms in regard to his personal life. Unlike his father and his Anglo-Saxon royal predecessors (barring of course Edward the Confessor) William appears to have remained faithful to his wife, Mathilda; all of their offspring were born within wedlock.²⁴⁰ Moreover, William appears to have been extremely sensitive about his own illegitimate background and was almost certainly conscious of how this might be perceived in relation to his pious, reforming self-image. The *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* relates that, earlier in the duke's career during a siege of the Norman town of Alençon, certain rebels had mocked William's questionable parentage.²⁴¹ The duke responded to this satire with brutality and he subsequently ordered for the hands and feet of the offending rebels to be hacked off in front of the towns' inhabitants. Following this event William's reputation for sensitivity over the issue of his illegitimacy appears to have preceded him as there are no further accounts to suggest that any one else taunted him in this manner! William's sensitivity regarding his illegitimate status may be strikingly contrasted with the more relaxed attitudes of his English counterparts. For example, whilst attempting to discredit the lineage of Harold Harefoot (king of England 1037–1040) the author of the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* clearly understood that a slur against Harold's illegitimate status would be wholly ineffective for this end (Harold was the son of Cnut's royal concubine, Ælfgifu of

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 89.

²⁴⁰ William of Malmesbury commented that the Conqueror "...had such respect for chastity...that public gossip told of his impotence." ("precipue in prima adolescentia castitatem suspexit, in tantum ut publice sereretur nichil illum in femina posse.") *GRA*, vol. ii, pp. 500–501. Yet, William goes on to comment that certain 'scandal-mongers' claimed that when the Conqueror had attained the throne of England he had become swollen with vanity and conducted an adulterous affair with a priest's daughter. The monk dismisses this as a malicious rumour, however, even if there were some truth in these claims the matter appears to have been discreetly suppressed. Indeed, this suppression would appear to be in marked contrast to the overt expressions of virility that characterised Anglo-Saxon kingship prior to the Confessor's rule.

²⁴¹ *GND*, p. 125. It should be noted that this account does not derive from the Conqueror's panegyrist. Rather, it appears in a later interpolation made by Orderic Vitalis. It is, therefore, probable that Orderic's version of this story was shaped by his reform-minded twelfth century sensibilities. Nevertheless, it is equally probable that the account is accurate and that Orderic had greater freedom to report such an incident because as Bates has noted "William's eleventh century biographers tried to conceal his illegitimate birth." See *Conqueror*, p. 22.

Northampton). The author of the *Encomium* was therefore forced to make the more drastic claim that Harold had been the son of a female slave and had been secretly substituted during his early infancy for Ælfifu's real son by Cnut.²⁴² This is extremely significant because it suggests that distinctions between slavery and freedom were far more powerful than distinctions between legitimacy and illegitimacy within Anglo-Saxon society.

In pre-Conquest England it had been possible for sons born out of wedlock to inherit their father's patrimony even at the highest levels of society.²⁴³ Old English terms such as *hornungsunu* 'illegitimate son' and *hornungbrothor* 'illegitimate brother' would appear to confirm this.²⁴⁴ Similarly, the existence of the adjective *cyfesboren* 'born of a concubine' and the noun *doc* 'son of a concubine' suggest that such offspring would also be recognised despite their apparently illicit conception. The inheritance rights conferred upon children born of a free concubine clearly acted as a distinguishing privilege elevating them above the offspring of a slave concubine.²⁴⁵ It would appear that in Anglo-Saxon society there were two key factors that determined the ability of an illegitimate son to inherit from his father. The first was an open and public acknowledgement of paternity. The second was the confirmation that the individual's mother was a freeborn woman untainted by servile status. The implications of this are clear; for Anglo-Saxon society the issues of social and legal inclusion were ultimately defined by an individual's free status rather than by their legitimate lineage.²⁴⁶

In the years following the Norman Conquest William I's adoption of the reformers' norms did not herald the end of concubinage in English society or even the diminution in the number of illegitimate offspring.²⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the imposition of the Norman elite, very

²⁴² *EER*, pp. 38–41.

²⁴³ See chapter 2.

²⁴⁴ Clunies Ross, "Concubinage", pp. 16–17.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16, "...the basic distinction between children born of free parents and those born of a pair of slaves or of a freeman and a slave-woman meant that the question of legitimacy was not fundamental in determining the child's status, as long as his paternity was declared." In this extract Clunies Ross is referring specifically to the Norwegian law codes although she suggests that a similar state of affairs existed in Anglo-Saxon England. Indeed, this would appear to be supported by the author of the *EER*.

²⁴⁷ Indeed, Henry II (1154–1189) was notorious for his lustful passions and maintained several concubines at once, see W.L. Warren, *King John* (London: Eyre Methuen,

much under the guiding hand of William the Conqueror, appears to have acted as a catalyst for a significant alteration in the rules regarding the transmission of inheritance. The issue of legitimacy came to be of central significance for the security of the Norman settlement. As Searle has argued the Norman manipulation of marital unions essentially legitimised the Conquest.

The pattern of marriage at the knightly level was necessarily to marry Englishwomen, to become lords of their male in-laws, and to produce children who were legitimate heirs of English grandfathers and legitimate claimants to the fiefs of Norman fathers.²⁴⁸

This strong desire for legitimate heirs, accentuated by William's own reforming credentials and exemplary monogamous marriage, appears to have facilitated a shift in attitudes towards the prestigious nature of legitimacy in relation to the royal succession.²⁴⁹ William was to be the last illegitimate ruler to grace the throne of England; a fact which is indicative of significant changes in the way English society ordered itself. In the years following the Norman Conquest traditional Anglo-Saxon customs regarding concubinage and the recognition of illegitimate heirs fell quickly into decline.²⁵⁰ Consequently, the illegitimate sons of noble concubines found that they were no longer able to compete for a slice of their father's patrimony even when they had received paternal recognition. The Norman Conquest, therefore, transformed the traditional Anglo-Saxon distinction between free born and slave born into a distinction between legitimate birth and illegitimate birth. This, in turn, helped to undermine one of the most significant social distinctions in early medieval English society: the distinction between the slave and

1978), p. 26. It appears likely that the Conqueror's own son, Henry I as Warren Hollister has noted that "Henry's wild oats...produced more than twenty known bastards." C. Warren Hollister, *Henry I* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 41–43. For an insightful discussion of how revised rules of legitimacy were intimately bound up with the objectives of reform which sought to promote celibacy and separate "carnality and spirituality" see Wertheimer, "Children of Disorder", pp. 382–407.

²⁴⁸ E. Searle, "Women and the Legitimation of Succession at the Norman Conquest", *ANS*, iii, 1980, pp. 159–170, 169, see also Thomas, *English and Normans*, pp. 129–130.

²⁴⁹ For a wider discussion of a shift in inheritance practices in relation to the objectives of reform see Moore, *Revolution*, pp. 65–75.

²⁵⁰ "The Normans, of course, had their mistresses, but the specifically Anglo-Saxon traditions concerning concubines and their offspring may have fallen into decline after the Conquest and the vocabulary of the concubinage died with the custom." Clunies Ross, "Concubinage", p. 18.

the free individual. This was a triumph for the ecclesiastical reformers who regarded blood lineage relating to moral sexual behaviour as far more significant than the traditional power indicators relating to status and gender. The English elites' tacit acceptance of these revised codes of sexual conduct and heirship therefore facilitated the blurring of the traditional dichotomies made between the slave and the free. One result of this would be a marked diminution in the cultural significance of the institution of slavery following the Conqueror's reign.

The imposition of the Norman regime was to act as a catalyst for cultural change in another significant area of English society that was intimately associated with slavery. Both Gillingham and Strickland have argued that the Conqueror's reign heralded the introduction of a revised set of behavioural codes in warfare which reduced the levels of violence inherent in Anglo-Saxon society and promoted the humane treatment of elite opponents. In particular, Strickland suggests that by the late eleventh century the Frankish and Norman elite had adopted a dramatically modified attitude towards battle-taken opponents of equal social standing. Such individuals were no longer regarded as figures of scorn and dishonour, fit only for execution, mutilation or enslavement, but rather they were held as honourable prisoners until they were ransomed by their kinsmen/followers. Practices like this clearly reinforced aristocratic affinity, limited internecine violence and reduced the likelihood of longstanding vengeance vendettas. Strickland contrasts continental revisions in warrior behaviour sharply with the contemporary Anglo-Scandinavian treatment of opponents which was far more derogatory, brutal and blood soaked. Thus, he argues, the Norman Conquest of England not only signalled the introduction of knight-service into England but also "differing conceptions and conventions of warfare."²⁵¹

Similarly, Gillingham regards the Norman adoption of revised codes of warrior behaviour as evidence of an increasingly 'civilized' and

²⁵¹ M. Strickland, "Slaughter, Slavery or Ransom: The Impact of the Conquest on the Conduct in Warfare" in Hicks, *England in the Eleventh Century*, pp. 41–61, 47, 61. See also Gillingham "Introduction", p. 32. In a more recent article Lavelle has highlighted the significance of hostage taking for resolving disputes/making peace in late Anglo-Saxon England. His study certainly reveals that the situation may have been more complex than either Strickland or Gillingham suggest. However, the majority of the examples he cites do not refer to hostages taken in battle, see R. Lavelle, "The Use and Abuse of Hostages in Later Anglo-Saxon England", *Early Medieval Europe*, 14, 3, 2006, pp. 269–296.

'chivalric' mode of aristocratic warfare.²⁵² Despite the clear aristocratic bias of these revised military norms he feels that

Even the vast majority of commoners, the non-combatants, were now much less likely to become casualties of war, since they were no longer in danger of being caught up in slave-raiding campaigns and, in consequence, being either massacred or captured and sold as slaves... In this sense too the 1066 campaign was the first new-style invasion of England; it did not result in an increased supply of slaves to the market... the acquisition of slaves was no longer one of the main purposes of Norman warfare.²⁵³

We have already seen that it is difficult to differentiate between the social values and behavioural norms extant within the societies of Normandy and Anglo-Saxon England. Orderic Vitalis indicates that extremely violent and bloody internecine violence remained a prominent feature of Norman society during the first half of the eleventh century.²⁵⁴ Moreover, Warner's *Moriucht* clearly reveals there was a vibrant market for enslaved captives at Rouen during the early years of that century.²⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the central years of the eleventh century appear to have heralded some significant cultural and socio-economic changes within Normandy. The close contact between the Norman ducal household and the kings of France during the tenth and eleventh centuries appears to have facilitated the dissemination of the Frankish notion of knighthood into Norman society.²⁵⁶ This notion had been heavily influenced by Christian ethics and was accompanied by a revised set of behavioural norms and attitudes towards the acceptable conventions of warfare.²⁵⁷

²⁵² See Gillingham, "Introduction", for a critique of Gillingham's position see Halsall, "Violence and Society", p. 11.

²⁵³ Gillingham, "Introduction", pp. 51–52, Strickland, "Slaughter", pp. 47–48. A contention also supported by Marjorie Chibnall, *Anglo-Norman England, 1066–1166* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 187–188 and Pelteret, *Slavery*, p. 253.

²⁵⁴ Gillingham, "Introduction", p. 34, Gillingham argues that this violence constitutes blood feuding, a point which has been contended by Bennett who sees it rather as small scale political violence relating to dynastic concerns, see M. Bennett, "Violence in Eleventh-Century Normandy: Feud, Warfare and Politics" in Halsall, *Violence and Society*, pp. 127–139, see also Halsall, "Violence and Society" in the same volume, pp. 1–45, 20–25. For examples of such violence see *OV*, vol. ii, pp. 14, 28, 120, vol. iii, 88, vol. iv, 82, vol. vi, 396–398. See also Strickland, "Slaughter", p. 43.

²⁵⁵ D. Pelteret, "Slave Raiding and Slave Trading in Early England", *Anglo-Saxon England*, xi, pp. 99–114, 108–109.

²⁵⁶ Strickland, "Slaughter", p. 42.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

The Normans also appear to have adopted Frankish methods of warfare that employed well-trained cavalry and utilised castles to secure territory.²⁵⁸ This, in turn, stimulated changes in tenurial structures that encouraged more static siege based conflicts and replaced the more traditional nomadic raids of the Normans' Viking ancestors.²⁵⁹ These modifications in military conduct were also accompanied by a marked reduction in the traditional Germanic practices of feud, vengeance killing, internecine violence and slave raiding activities.²⁶⁰ By the close of the eleventh century, then, the members of the Norman elite appear to have adhered to a modified set of norms that prohibited the killing or mutilation of high status opponents and the targeting of non-combatants.²⁶¹ Furthermore, William the Conqueror appears to have been a significant player in promoting this shift in attitudes. Indeed, it appears to have suited his pious self-image to present himself as a chivalrous and civilised ruler rather than as a brutal and merciless warrior. This is clearly evident in the writings of his panegyrist, William of Poitiers, who relates that even during his youth the duke had acted as a role model and conducted himself according to tempered honourable codes of warfare.²⁶² Following the duke's victory at Val-ès Dunes in 1047 he was said to have asserted both his political hegemony and his reforming piety by imposing the Truce of God upon the territories of Normandy.²⁶³

By his (Duke William's) strict discipline and by his laws robbers, murderers, and evildoers have been driven out of Normandy. The oath of peace which is called the Truce has been most scrupulously observed

²⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 57.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Vengeance killings and the mutilation of opponents were certainly widespread in Norman society during the first half of the eleventh century. Yet, such killings appear to have significantly diminished by the final quarter of that century, see Gillingham, "Introduction", p. 36 and Bennett, "Violence", pp. 134–139.

²⁶¹ Gillingham, "Introduction", pp. 34–36.

²⁶² For example, his panegyrist relates that early in his career, whilst fighting in the feudal host of the French king, the duke had entered into a skirmish with several enemy knights. However, William of Poitiers comments that the duke deliberately spared his noble opponents rather than running them through, see *GG*, pp. 15–17. William's less chivalrous treatment of his captives at Alençon may, perhaps, be attributed to the grave insults that they had directed at him, see above.

²⁶³ H.E.J. Cowdrey, "The Peace and the Truce of God in the Eleventh Century", *P&P*, 46, 1970, pp. 42–67, 60.

in Normandy, whereas in other regions it is frequently violated through unbridled wickedness. He listened to the cause of widows, orphans, and the poor, acting with mercy and judging most justly.... Villages, fortified places, and towns had stable and good laws because of him, and everywhere people greeted him with joyous applause and sweet songs.²⁶⁴

The Truce of God had first been proclaimed in the regions of Burgundy and Aquitaine during the final quarter of the tenth century.²⁶⁵ During the eleventh century the concept was repeatedly refined and reissued by the Frankish ecclesiastical authorities.²⁶⁶ As with the law codes of Archbishop Wulfstan of York, the Truce sought to promote peace and centralised rule, to protect Church institutions and to reduce the violent activities of the warrior fraternity.²⁶⁷ As such, the promotion of the Truce of God was intimately associated with the cause of the reform movement.²⁶⁸

William's secular power, thereby, facilitated the implementation of one of the reformers' most significant goals. In return for this William received the powerful ideological endorsement of the ecclesiastical authorities of both Normandy and Rome. The suppression of dynastic vengeance killings and internecine violence was a policy that clearly benefited the interests of both parties.²⁶⁹ William was to make use of the Truce of God, once again, as he attempted to suppress the violent tendencies of both his own men and the remnants of the Anglo-Saxon elite in the years following the Conquest.²⁷⁰

In Anglo-Saxon society the traditional conventions of Germanic warfare had not been significantly modified by the revised codes embraced by the Norman elite. The pre-eminent cultural significance of codes of vengeance and sexual jealousy ensured that unrestrained vengeance

²⁶⁴ "*Eius animaduersione et legibus e Normannia sunt exterminata latrones, homicide, malefici. Sanctissime in Normannia observabatur sacramentum pacis quam treuam uocant, quod effrenis regionum aliarum iniquitas frequenter temerat. Causam uiduæ, inopis, pupilli, ipse humiliter audiebat, misericorditer agebat, rectissime definiebat... Ville, castra, urbes, iura per eum habebant stabilia et bona. Ipsum letis plausibus, dulcibus cantilenis uulgo efferebant.*" GG, pp. 80–81.

²⁶⁵ Cowdrey, "Peace", p. 42. See also Head and Landes, *Peace of God*, pp. 3–7 and Moore, *Revolution*, p. 8.

²⁶⁶ Cowdrey, "Peace", pp. 48, 54–58 and Head and Landes, *Peace of God*, pp. 3–7, Moore, *Revolution*, pp. 8–10.

²⁶⁷ Moore, *Revolution*, pp. 8–11, Bennett, "Violence", p. 137.

²⁶⁸ Indeed as Cowdrey has commented it helped to create a "...milieu within which the reformed papacy came to be, on the whole, quietly accepted by the French church." Cowdrey, "Peace", p. 54. See also Goetz, "Protection", pp. 273–279.

²⁶⁹ Cowdrey, "Peace", p. 60.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, see note 279, below.

slayings and slaving activity remained a characteristic of Anglo-Saxon warfare.²⁷¹ Furthermore, the continuing prevalence of illegitimate heirs and concubinage promoted internecine violence and worked against the centralising influence of monarchical power.²⁷² These traditional Germanic traits were recognised by contemporary French writers who felt that English society was characterised by a particularly savage and barbaric behaviour.²⁷³ When Duke William landed his invasion force at Pevensey he was clearly aware that he faced a very different type of foe from the ones that he had faced in Northern France. Harold Godwineson's troops were not likely to adhere to the chivalric codes that required the humane treatment and ransom of noble opponents. This was made clear by their behaviour at the battle of Stamford Bridge at which they slaughtered their Scandinavian counterparts almost to a man.²⁷⁴ As a consequence, the duke is said to have reminded his men that they were not fighting a chivalric opponent. According to William of Poitiers the Conqueror instructed them that

If they fought like men they would have victory, honour, and wealth. If not, they would let themselves either be slaughtered, or captured to be mocked by the most cruel enemies.²⁷⁵

This, in turn, would appear to explain William's rather unchivalrous behaviour at the battle of Hastings, which was essentially a conflict of

²⁷¹ Gillingham, "Introduction", pp. 38–39 and Strickland, "Slaughter", pp. 46–51, see also chapter 2.

²⁷² I would argue that modern historians have overplayed the unified nature of the English kingdom during the eleventh century. For example, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* reveals that in 1052, following his exile by Edward the Confessor, Harold Godwineson had few qualms about ravaging the lands bordering the Severn estuary and raiding for slaves there. Indeed, it was only when he returned to the heartland of his territory on the South coast that he received local support and provisions. Harold, evidently, had a relatively parochial concept of the kingdom of England, see *ASC E* (Swanton), pp. 178–179, and Wyatt, "Significance", p. 340, note 93. Similarly, the *Chronicle* relates that a Northumbrian force enslaved hundreds of people in the midlands and took them northward in 1065, *ASC D*, p. 193. This appears to support William of Malmesbury's claim that the Northumbrians considered themselves to be independent from Godwineson's rule, *GRA*, p. 365. See also chapter 1.

²⁷³ See *GG*, pp. 125–127, 167, *The Letters of Ivo of Chartres*, *PL*, 162, J.P. Migne (ed.) (Paris: Migne, 1854), 219–220, no. 215, *LoL*, p. 30, see also J. Gillingham, "Conquering the Barbarians: War and Chivalry in Twelfth Century Britain", *HSJ*, 4, 1992, pp. 67–84, 83.

²⁷⁴ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 582.

²⁷⁵ "Si more uirorum pugnent, uictoriam, decus, diuitias habituros. Aloquin aut ocus trucidari, aut captos ludibrio fore hostibus crudelissimis." *GG*, pp. 124–127.

death or glory.²⁷⁶ Yet, his brutal tactics at Hastings do not appear to have negated his commitment to the revised codes of warfare endorsed by ecclesiastical authorities and expounded in the Truce of God.²⁷⁷ William's adherence to these codes is clearly evident from his actions following his victory. The Conqueror appears to have been particularly concerned that his men would revert to their traditional practices of pillage and sexual licence. In order to limit such activities and to stabilise the violent disorder that was affecting English society in general William appears to have extended the Truce of God into his new dominion.²⁷⁸ William of Poitiers comments that

He restrained the knights of middling rank and the common soldiers with appropriate regulations. Women were safe from the violence which passionate men often inflict. Even those offences indulged with the consent of shameless women were forbidden, so as to avoid scandal. He scarcely allowed the soldiers to drink in taverns, since drunkenness leads to quarrels and quarrels to murder. He forbade strife, murder and every kind of plunder, restraining the people with arms and the arms with laws. Judges were appointed who could strike terror into the mass of the soldiers, and stern punishments were decreed for offenders; nor were the Normans given greater licence than the Bretons or the Aquitanians...He allowed no place in his kingdom for thefts, brigandage or evil deeds.²⁷⁹

What is particularly interesting about this passage is that William of Poitiers believed that it was the "knights of middling rank" (*milites uero mediae nobilitatis*) and the "mass of the soldiers" (*gregarios*) who were

²⁷⁶ The employment of these codes were frequently dependent upon the nature of one's opponent. Indeed, if your enemy did not adhere to them then it was considered acceptable to fight them using their own 'barbaric' methods, see Strickland, "Slaughter", p. 43 and Gillingham, "Conquering", pp. 67–84.

²⁷⁷ William is said to have punished the Norman knight who had hacked at Godwine-son's corpse. Moreover, he also punished the cold-blooded murderers of his enemy Earl Edwin, see *OV*, vol. ii, p. 258, *GRA*, p. 457, 469, *ASC D & E* (Swanton), pp. 206–208 and also Gillingham, "Introduction", p. 43.

²⁷⁸ Cowdrey, "Peace", pp. 60–61.

²⁷⁹ "*Milites uero mediae nobilitatis atque gregarios, aptissimis edictis caercuit. Tutae erant a ui mulieres, quam saepe amatores inferunt. Etiam illa delicta quae fierent consensu impudicarum, infamiae prohibendae gratia uetabantur. Potare militem in tabernis non multum concessit quoniam ebrietas litem, lis homicidium solet generare. Seditiones interdixit, caedem et omnem rapinam, frenans ut populos armis, ita legibus arma. Ludices qui uulgo militem essent timori constituti sunt, simul acerbae poenae in eos qui deliquerent decretae sunt; necque liberior Normanni quam Britanni uel Aquitani agere permittebantur... Latrocinii, inuasionibus, maleficiis locum omnem intra suos terminos denegauit.*" *GG*, pp. 158–161. Similarly, Orderic Vitalis comments that William "forbade disorders, murder, and plunder, restraining the people by arms and the arms by laws." ("*Seditiones interdixit caedem et omnem rapinam frenans ut populos armis, ita legibus arma.*") *OV*, vol. ii, pp. 192–193, see also *HA*, p. 407.

likely to have behaved in a manner that contravened the reform codes regarding physical and sexual restraint. By implication, then, this would suggest that William's panegyrist felt that the invading elite already understood and adhered to these codes without question. Yet, William of Poitiers' account probably paints a rather optimistic picture of the extent of the Conqueror's power to restrain the rapacious tendencies of his warriors. Other medieval commentators provide an alternative perspective; condemning the violent behaviour of the Norman nobility following the Conquest. For example, Henry of Huntingdon felt that William subsequently appointed officials who were "...more frightful than thieves and robbers, and more savage than the most savage."²⁸⁰ In his *Historia Novorum in Anglia* (c. 1085–1123) Eadmer, an English monk based at Canterbury complained that

When the great Duke William first conquered this land, many of his men, pluming themselves on so great a victory and considering that everything ought to yield and submit to their wishes and lusts, began to do violence not only to the possessions of the conquered but also where opportunity offered to their women, married and unmarried alike, with shameful licentiousness. Thereupon a number of women anticipating this and fearing for their own virtue betook themselves to convents of Sisters and taking the veil protected themselves in their company from such infamy.²⁸¹

Eadmer's account therefore suggests that in the immediate post-Conquest period the Norman nobility readily resorted to the much more traditional practices of rapine and marriage by abduction. Yet, he also reveals that there was a very significant difference between the conduct of these pillaging Norman warriors to that of their Anglo-Saxon predecessors. In Anglo-Saxon society the rape and abduction of abbesses and nuns had been a means to express power and conquest but for the Normans such behaviour does appear to have been considered taboo.²⁸² The Norman warriors may still have expressed their hegemony through

²⁸⁰ "...furibus et raptoribus atrociores erant, at omnibus seuissimis seuiores." HA, pp. 402–403.

²⁸¹ "Nam quando ille magnus Willelmus hanc terram primo devicit, multi suorum sibi pro tanta victoria applaudentes, omniaque suis voluntatibus atque luxuriis obaedire ac subdi debere autumantes non solum in possessiones victorum, sed et ipsas matronas ac virgines, ubi facultas eis aspirabat, nefanda libidine ceperunt insanire. Quod nonnullae praevidentes, et suo pudori metuentes, monasteria virginum petivere, acceptoque velo sese inter ipsas a tanta infamia protexere.", Eadmeri *Historia Novorum in Anglia*, M. Rule (ed.) (London: Longman, 1884), pp. 123–124, translation from *Eadmer's History of Recent Events in England*, G. Bosanquet (ed. and trans.) (London: Cresset Press, 1964), p. 129.

²⁸² See chapter 2.

the traditional idiom of sexual violence but they do not appear to have pursued such violence against holy women. As a consequence it appears that English noblewomen and girls became aware that if they fled to the local nunnery and disguised themselves as women of the cloth then they could escape such violence.²⁸³ The restraint shown by the Norman warriors in their treatment of holy women is, therefore, representative of a subtle yet significant modification in the attitudes of the Norman warrior fraternity when compared to their Anglo-Saxon counterparts.

William of Poitiers' portrayal of Duke William as a moderate and merciful conqueror who restrained his men from pillage and rapine is, at best, one sided and, at worst, highly inaccurate. In the aftermath of the Conquest, territory was plundered, peasants were slain, noblewomen were raped and Englishmen were killed and exiled.²⁸⁴ Yet, William of Poitiers' opinion that the Conqueror enforced the Truce of God and suppressed brigandage and rapine is significant. It is indicative of the influence that the Gregorian reformers had exerted upon Norman perceptions regarding the acceptable levels of violence, which were to be employed in warfare against a Christian foe.²⁸⁵ This was especially evident in the Conqueror's attitude towards non-combatants. The Bayeux Tapestry's depiction of William's troops violently ravaging peasants' homesteads would not, at first glance, appear to be particularly chivalrous (fig 4).²⁸⁶ Yet, in the context of pre-Conquest Anglo-Saxon society their behaviour may have been viewed as relatively moderate. Indeed, at no point in the tapestry is there a portrayal of peasants being enslaved *en masse* and shipped back to Normandy. This would appear to be in marked contrast to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* accounts of English slave raiding in the eleventh century or the *Historia Gruffud*

²⁸³ It appears that many women may have taken such action. In a letter to Gundulf, bishop of Rochester, dating to 1089 Archbishop Lanfranc instructed Gundulf that those women who had "fled to the monastery not for love of the religious life but for fear of the French" should depart from the nunneries. ("*Quae uero non amore religionis sed timore Francigenarum sicut uos dicitis ad monasterium confugerunt.*") *LoL*, 53, pp. 166–167.

²⁸⁴ Gillingham, "Introduction", p. 40.

²⁸⁵ As Patrick Wormald has argued the "...most ideologically sensitized kings and royal advisers were precisely those most prone to issue (law) codes—or at any rate codes that their servants troubled to keep." The ideological sensitivity of the Conqueror is clearly evident in his actions. See Wormald, *English Law*, p. 482.

²⁸⁶ W. Grape, *The Bayeux Tapestry* (Munich/New York: Prestel, 1994), p. 143. It should be noted that this was a deliberate tactic employed by William to provoke Godwineson into battle as the lands being ravaged were Harold's own.

vab Kenan's boast concerning the Welsh prince's slaving activities in Arwystli.²⁸⁷ William of Poitiers appears to have felt that this abstention from slaving activity was a trait which emphasised Norman civility and set them apart from their British neighbours and their Roman forebears. The panegyrist remarks that rather than enslaving the English population the Conqueror had emancipated them from the tyranny of Harold Godwineson's rule.²⁸⁸ He also notes that if they had wished to the Normans "...could have thrown a thousand of the most illustrious men of that people into chains."²⁸⁹ Yet, rather than behaving in such a barbaric manner William the Conqueror had chosen to return to his homeland in a glorious, civilised and Christian fashion,

...not bringing with him a crowd of captives in the Roman fashion, but having in his entourage and allegiance the primate of the bishops of all Britain...and sons of the English worthy by both ancestry and wealth to be called kings.²⁹⁰

It might, of course, be argued that William chose not to take slaves or raid for slaves because he did not wish to damage his newly acquired kingdom; or that his political insecurity in the immediate post-Conquest period prevented him from doing so. However, given the eleventh-century cultural context, some symbolic small-scale slave raiding would have been expected behaviour after such a dramatic military success (especially given that chivalric rules were invalidated when one was facing an unchivalric enemy). The general absence of pre- and post-Conquest Norman slave raiding activities, even during William's ravaging of the north, would therefore seem to have been based upon ideological, as well as pragmatic, reasoning. At this point it should be noted that the Norman elite had no more of an aversion to the institution of slavery than did the contemporary ecclesiastical hierarchy. Pelteret has revealed how the new Norman lords were often happy to assume control of slave labour forces on the estates that they had appropriated from their English predecessors.²⁹¹ It was the practice of slave raiding in warfare that

²⁸⁷ Or, indeed, the accounts of Scottish slave raids on England during the twelfth century, see chapter 5.

²⁸⁸ "...liberauit in perpetuu *Guillelmus gestem omnem a tiranide Haraldi.*" *GG*, pp. 172–173.

²⁸⁹ "...mille ex ipsa natione illustres in uincula, si placuisset, coniecissent Normanni." *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ "...non trahens, ut Romani, uulgus captiuum; sed habens in comitatu et obsequio suo totius *Britanniae episcoporum primatem...et filius Anglorum tam stemmatis quam opum dignitate reges appellandos.*" *Ibid.*, pp. 174–175.

²⁹¹ D. Pelteret, "Slavery in the Danelaw" in R. Samson (ed.), *Social Approaches to Viking Studies* (Glasgow: Cruithne, 1991), pp. 179–188, 182.

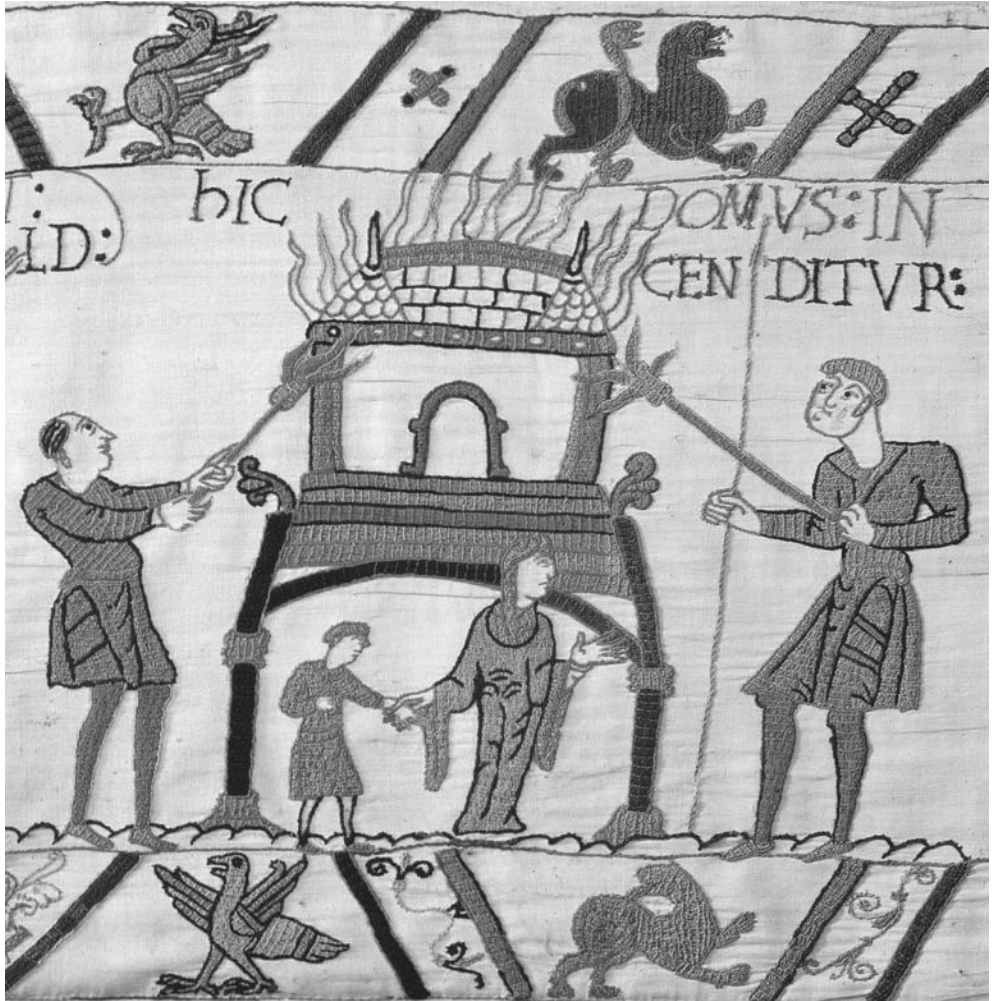


Figure 4. Bayeux tapestry portrayal of Norman forces ravaging the lands of Harold Godwineson prior to the battle of Hastings. Detail from the Bayeux Tapestry—11th Century, by special permission of the City of Bayeux.

the Normans appear to have regarded as anachronistic and uncivilised. It is true that certain Norman magnates (operating in boarder locations and acting independently of the Conqueror) did indulge in slave raiding activities when faced with opponents who used similar tactics. For example, Orderic Vitalis remarks that whilst fighting the Welsh 'barbarians' (*barbaris opponeretur*) Robert of Rhuddlan adopted native tactics "...some he slaughtered mercilessly on the spot like cattle; others he kept for years in fetters, or forced into harsh unlawful slavery."²⁹² Yet, Orderic clearly disapproved of such behaviour and regarded it as unbecoming of an individual from a 'civilised' reform-minded society, commenting that "...it is not right that Christians should so oppress their brothers."²⁹³

Despite the bloody events at Hastings the Conqueror appears to have shown remarkable clemency towards his English political opponents in the decades following the Conquest. This is perhaps best illustrated by his treatment of his significant English rival Edgar the Atheling.²⁹⁴ Edgar was the great grandson of Æthelred II and the nephew of Edward the Confessor and as such he had a legitimate claim to the English throne. Yet, despite the clear political threat posed by the Atheling, William did not attempt to harm or even exile him.²⁹⁵ On the contrary, the Conqueror allowed Edgar to retain his freedom and received him at the royal court. Indeed, William showed remarkable mercy and forgiveness towards the majority of those English nobles who rebelled against his rule in the decade following the Conquest.²⁹⁶ He consistently attempted to reconcile himself with the elite members of the Anglo-Saxon warrior fraternity. The Conqueror was undoubtedly aware that Anglo-Saxon society had been characterised by a high level of internecine strife and political violence. He therefore appears to have realised that there would be little hope of securing his conquest and imposing his rule unless he could limit such violence. As a result, William attempted to bring the remaining Anglo-Saxon elite into his circle of influence in order to 'educate' them in the modified codes of conduct of war and peace expounded by the reforming clergy. In order to illustrate this

²⁹² "*Nam quosdam comminus ut pecudes irreuerenter occidit, alios uero diutius uinculis mancipauit, aut indebitæ seruituti atrociter subiugauit.*" *OV*, vol. iv, pp. 138–139.

²⁹³ "*Christicolæ non licet fratres suos sic opprimere.*" *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ Gillingham, "Introduction", p. 41.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.* see also Stafford, *Unification*, pp. 100, 103–104.

²⁹⁶ Gillingham, "Introduction", pp. 42–44. That is with the notable exception of Earl Waltheof of Northumbria who will be discussed below.

point we will now briefly examine the lives of three significant Old English warriors who survived the Norman Conquest: Hereward the Wake, Eadric the Wild and Earl Waltheof of Northumbria.

In the years following 1066 there was widespread, if fragmented, English resistance to the Norman Conquest.²⁹⁷ Disaffected bands of Anglo-Saxon warriors appear to have resisted the cultural and political changes that were being thrust upon their society by using traditional methods. They practised brigandage and ravaged territories from bases situated in wilderness locations. William of Jumièges felt that following the battle of Hastings

Throughout the country bandits conspired with the intention of slaying the soldiers whom the king had everywhere left behind to defend the kingdom.²⁹⁸

Hereward the Wake was the leader of such a group of men. As we have already seen, Hereward's men operated from an island base within the marshy fenlands of Cambridgeshire and violently resisted the Norman encroachments upon English manors in the area.²⁹⁹ Hereward's true fate is unknown because he disappears from the historical record following an enigmatic entry in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 1071. This relates that following the siege of Ely all of the English rebels surrendered to the Conqueror "...except Hereward alone and all who wished to follow him, and he courageously led their escape."³⁰⁰

Yet, the twelfth-century author of the semi-fictional *Gesta Herewardi* provides a fuller and more interesting ending to Hereward's tale. This account of Hereward's later career is certainly fabricated. However, it does provide us with some illuminating details about early twelfth-century perceptions regarding the likely fate of such a man.³⁰¹ During

²⁹⁷ Thomas, *English and Normans*, pp. 63–65.

²⁹⁸ "*Coniurauerant enim latrunculi per tutam patriam, quatinus milites, quos ad tuendum regnum reliquerat.*" William goes on to remark that these bandits spent their time practising "piracy and robbery" ("*inhonestas opes piratice latrocinio sibi contrahentes*") from "remote places" ("*presidiorum remotiora*"), *GND*, vol. ii, pp. 178–179. Similarly, William of Malmesbury noted that the Anglo-Saxon earls Morcar and Edwin "...disturbed William's peace for some years by infesting the forests with covert brigandage..." ("*... aliquot annis pacem Willelmi turbauerunt, clandestinis latrociniiis siluas infestantes...*"), *GRA*, pp. 468–469.

²⁹⁹ See chapter 2.

³⁰⁰ "...buton Herewarde ane. 7 ealle þa þe mid him woldon. 7 he hi ahtlice út lædde." *ASC E*, *TSCP*, p. 208, translation from Swanton, *ASC* p. 208.

³⁰¹ This text was most probably composed during the early decades of the twelfth century, see chapter 2.

the first half of the *Gesta* Hereward is portrayed as a hot-headed and violent youth who brutally slays noble opponents and pursued a ruthless vendetta against the Normans who had slain his brother.³⁰² Yet, following his escape from the siege at Ely the *Vita* relates that Hereward was approached by a wealthy Norman widow who wished to marry him.³⁰³ This widow then approached King William in order to obtain a licence for the union that she had "...heard from the king's mouth, she could have for the asking *if* Hereward were peaceable and willing to pledge faith with him (i.e. the king)."³⁰⁴ When Hereward learned of this he

...sent messengers to the king and asked for the aforesaid woman, saying that he was willing to be reconciled with the king's majesty. He received Hereward's messengers graciously and, accepting what he proposed, appointed a day to meet him, adding that he had for a long time been wishing to receive him into his favour.³⁰⁵

Following his second marriage to this Norman lady (and his subsequent reconciliation to King William) Hereward's violent behaviour became notably modified. Indeed, the *Gesta's* portrayal describes Hereward being deliberately cultivated by the royal favour of his old enemy. When Hereward petitioned the king for his father's estate he was personally received by the Conqueror at the royal court. Not only this, but, King William complimented Hereward and his men on their appearance and fighting ability.³⁰⁶ The author of the *Gesta* clearly felt that the king's Norman courtiers and advisers would have been somewhat less enthusiastic about these English ruffians. He therefore portrayed these advisers as devious manipulators who subsequently hatched a plot to topple Hereward from the king's favour. This plot is particularly revealing because it involved provoking Hereward into contravening the modified codes of warrior behaviour expounded by the Conqueror. The author appears to have understood that it would have been a cultural imperative for an Anglo-Saxon warrior to defend the reputation of his prowess and manhood at all costs. This is clear from attitudes with which he imbued King William's evil courtiers, who

³⁰² *TLLE*, pp. 45–63. See also chapter 2.

³⁰³ Indeed, Hereward, the archetypal Englishman, did not resist her advances even though he was already married to the noblewoman Tufriða, *TLLE*, pp. 83–84.

³⁰⁴ (My italics), *ibid.*, p. 83. "...sicut ab ore regis audierat 'si pacifice vellet et fidelitatem ei faceret.'" *GH*, p. 397.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.* "Quapropter missis nunciis ad regem, predictam mulierem postulavit, atque apud regiam maiestatem se velle reconcilari. Quibus grater susceptis diem illi statuit, acceptans quae proposcerat, subiungens diu ante se velle illum gratia recipi."

³⁰⁶ *TLLE*, p. 85.

recognised that it would be easy to provoke Hereward because, as an Englishman, he would not be able to "...keep his hands off anyone if impudently or haughtily provoked to a fight or a test of courage."³⁰⁷ They, therefore, arranged that Hereward should be insulted by a surly Norman knight named Ogga. After suffering an outpouring of verbal abuse from this knight Hereward could stand it no longer and he agreed to fight a duel with him. It was arranged that this conflict would be held in secret because such violent behaviour would be in direct contravention of the king's peace. During the ensuing duel Hereward showed an uncharacteristic level of restraint and repeatedly urged his attacker to desist in his assault.³⁰⁸ Despite this Ogga continued to hurl insults and viscerously assault Hereward who was eventually forced to cut his opponent down. This slaying played directly into the hands of Hereward's enemies who immediately reported this unchivalrous behaviour to the king and

...deceitfully urged him not to have near him such men any longer; traitors and enemies of his realm; just so neither to be received at his court nor afforded a truce, but ought rather be handed over to punishment or kept in perpetual imprisonment.³⁰⁹

As a result of this treachery King William ordered that Hereward should be taken into custody and he was subsequently restrained in fetters for over a year at the castle of a respected knight named Robert de Horepol.³¹⁰ Hereward endured this indignity with grace. However, when his men learned that he was to be transferred into the custody of the detestable castellan of Rockingham (who is not named) they intercepted his armed escort and a violent conflict ensued. Just as Hereward's men were getting the better of their opponents their leader ordered that they should "...be careful not to injure the troops of his respected warder, and that Robert himself with his men should be allowed to go unharmed."³¹¹ Robert subsequently went directly to the royal court

³⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 85. "...scientes nulli homini dextram suam se prohibere velle, proterve vel superbe ab aliquo provocatus ad pugnam vel ad fortitudinem." GH, p. 400.

³⁰⁸ TLE, p. 86.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 86. "...ac illum dolo commonefacientes, ne amplius tales viros quasi proditores regni sui et inimicos juxta se haberet, nec in curia sua amodo recipi debere, nec ad concordiam, sed magis penis tradi, seu perpetualiter in carcere claudi." GH, p. 401.

³¹⁰ TLE, p. 86.

³¹¹ Ibid., pp. 87–88. "Herwardo, semper clamavit diligenter observare collegam venerabilis magistri sui et illesos dimitti, cum ipso Robert huc illucque inter suos adhuc bellantes incedens et liberatorem animæ suæ eum denunciāns, qui statim a persecutione eorum cessaverunt." GH, pp. 402–404.

to inform William of Hereward's restraint and to plead with the king to show similar clemency towards the prisoner. Robert makes it clear to William that the only way to prevent Hereward from reverting to traditionally violent behaviour was to reinstate his patrimony and accept him into the civilising circle of the Norman elite (*my italics*).

...he promptly recounted to the king many commendable things about Hereward and his men, adding that such a warrior in whom there might be found great sincerity and fidelity, ought not to be lightly banished from him and from his realm for so trivial a reason. And he declared that if there was any new disturbance in the country, Hereward should certainly prefer to rely on his former resources *unless* he could find favour rather than servitude in the king's eyes, and should in the king's kindness receive back his father's estates. At this the king instantly said that he ought by rights to have it, giving a document- addressed to Hereward and the men of the district stating that he was to receive his father's estate and enjoy quiet possession of it; but *if* he wished to retain the king's friendship hereafter, he must henceforth be willing to pursue peace rather than folly. And so Hereward, the famous knight, tried and known in many places, was received into favour by the king. And with his father's land and possessions he lived on for many years faithfully serving King William and devotedly reconciled to his compatriots and friends.³¹²

The author of the *Gesta Herewardi*, therefore, identified William as a king who had shown lenience towards noble English rebels. He clearly felt that William had made an attempt to modify the behaviour of the surviving Anglo-Saxon warrior fraternity and to imbue them with the revised values expounded by the Peace of God movement. In Hereward's case this was achieved in several relatively subtle ways. First, he received a Norman wife who was no doubt intended to educate him regarding the acceptable social conduct that was expected by her countrymen. Following this union he received social acceptance and a royal endorse-

³¹² (*My italics*), *ibid.* "...multa repente de Herwardo et suis atque predicanda regi peroravit, subjungens pro parva causa non leviter tantum militem a se et de regno suo expelli non debere, in quem magna fiducia esset, si necessitas contingeret. Ipsum enim pro certo asseruit magis antiquis instare operibus, iterum perturbata terra, nisi in oculis ejusdem regis gratiam magis quam severitatem inveniret, terra patris sui ex benignitate regis suscepta. Quam recipere recte debere protinus rex subjunxit, mandans per literas suas etiam hoc Herwardo et provincialibus terram patris sui recipere debere et quiete possidere, ac deinceps pacem velle sectari, et non stultitiam si regis de cetero amicitiam optaret possidere. Herewardis igitur, miles insignis et in multis locis expertus et cognitus, a rege in gratiam susceptus, cum terris et possessionibus patris sui multis postmodum vixit annis, regi Willelmo fideliter serviens ac devote compatriotis placens et amicis." Other versions of the Hereward legend are less optimistic and portray the hero being slain at the hands of treacherous Normans whilst attempting to come to terms with the king. See *EdE*, vol. ii, pp. 178–181. See also Roffe, "Barony of Bourne", pp. 7–10.

ment that the author recognised would have created tensions amongst the Norman elite. As a result of these tensions Hereward's enemies were able to remove him from court by exploiting his traditional Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards masculine honour and vengeance. Yet, the hero's fall from royal grace also appears to have been a deliberate authorial device. It was employed to emphasise Hereward's adoption of modified codes of behaviour, which were exemplified by the clemency shown towards his captor Robert de Horepol and his men. In the *Gesta's* final 'happily ever after' scenario Hereward received his patrimony and was fully accepted into the charmed circle of the Norman elite on the provision that he was willing "to pursue peace rather than folly."³¹³ The author of the *Gesta Herewardi* was writing with a specific purpose; he was attempting, first and foremost, to reassert the fighting prowess of the Anglo-Saxon warrior.³¹⁴ Yet, he sought to portray this not in traditionally heroic terms but rather in a way which recognised and acknowledged how the behavioural landscape of the English warrior had been dramatically modified as a result of the Norman Conquest.³¹⁵

The *Gesta Herewardi* clearly provides an idealistic account of the way in which men like Hereward would have been treated following the English defeat at Hastings. Yet, despite the biased nature of this text the Conqueror does appear to have pursued a policy that attempted to culturally assimilate the Anglo-Saxon warrior fraternity into post-Conquest society. As we have seen, Eadric the Wild was another prominent Anglo-Saxon warrior who was closely associated with traditional behaviour and who, initially, resisted the Norman incursions in England.³¹⁶ Yet, in spite of Eadric's violent opposition to the new Norman overlords the Conqueror appears to have also welcomed him into his elite circle following the rebel's submission to the king in 1070.³¹⁷ Indeed, within two years Eadric achieved a position of remarkable trust at the royal court as the Worcester chronicler remarks that he accompanied William

³¹³ Ibid. "...ac deinceps pacem velle et non stultitiam."

³¹⁴ Thomas, "Gesta", pp. 227–232.

³¹⁵ "The author seems to have been reacting not only to a view of the English as poor warriors, but also as unchivalric and poorly versed in the rules of war... In this work it is not the Normans who are great, chivalric warriors, and the English who are second-rate fighters, but rather the reverse." Thomas, *English and Normans*, pp. 248–249.

³¹⁶ See chapter 2.

³¹⁷ Reynolds, "Eadric Silvaticus", pp. 102–105 and *CJW*, vol. iii, pp. 20–21.

and his army in an expedition against Malcolm, the king of Scots.³¹⁸ In Eadric's case, then, William's policy of reconciliation and acculturation appears to have been relatively successful. Yet, the Conqueror may also have had more pragmatic reasons for taking Eadric on his campaign to Scotland. The Scottish expedition of 1072 had been provoked by an incursion of Malcolm's forces who had brutally ravaged the Northern English territories.³¹⁹ In the years following the Conquest the Scots appear to have taken full advantage of the political turmoil in England. What is more, their raids appear to have been characterised by the customary rapine of the traditional warrior fraternity and by prolific slave raiding activities.³²⁰ William may have therefore recognised that the most effective tactic when dealing with the unchivalrous ravages of native warbands was to employ a similar warrior fraternity with which to engage and defeat them. William's frequent use of this tactic was commented upon by William of Malmesbury who noted that the Conqueror

...followed moreover the ingenious practice of Caesar's in his campaign against the Germans hidden in the vast forest of the Ardennes, from which they used to harass his troops with frequent sallies: he drove them out, not by using his own Romans but his Gaulish allies, so that, while the two sets of aliens cut each other to pieces, he himself enjoyed a triumph without bloodshed. This, as I was saying, was the method William used against the English.³²¹

In this instance, William of Malmesbury was specifically referring to the Conqueror's employment of the English general Eadnoth the Staller. Eadnoth lost his life and his English troops suffered heavy casualties when dealing with rebel forces commanded by Godwineson's son in 1068.³²² The Conqueror, thereby, appears to have found a particular

³¹⁸ *CJW*, vol. iii, pp. 20–21. This expedition is also reported by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* although Eadric's participation is not mentioned in that account, see Swanton *ASC D and E*, p. 208.

³¹⁹ These forces were said to have practised widespread slaving activities, see *HKE*, pp. 138–140.

³²⁰ See chapter 5.

³²¹ “*Quin etiam Cesarianum secutus ingenium, qui Germanus in Ardenna maxima silua abditos, et inde crebris eruptionibus exercitum suum affligentes, non per Romanos suos sed per Gallos federatos expulit, ut, dum alienigenae alterutros transfoderent, ipse sine sanguine triumphum duceret-idem, inquam, Willelmus in Anglos egit.*” *GRA*, pp. 470–471.

³²² *Ibid.*, see also Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 623. In a similar manner Earl Gospatric of Northumbria was pitted against the Scots following the raids of Canmore's forces in 1070. Gospatric appears to have employed traditionally brutal tactics

niche for men like Eadric and Eadnoth, which enabled him to bridle the unrestrained behaviour of the Anglo-Saxon warrior fraternity whilst he attempted to incorporate them into a post-Conquest elite imbued with the norms of the Peace of God movement. Moreover, these warriors appear to have practised a method of warfare with which William would, generally, have preferred not to soil his hands or indeed reputation. Nevertheless, the persistent brigandage of the English *Silvatici*, especially in the Midlands and the North, appears to have provoked the Conqueror into adopting similar tactics of depopulation and he mercilessly ravaged these regions during 1069–1070. Yet, it is significant that even during these ravages William did not adopt the traditional Anglo-Saxon practice of slave taking. Although the Conqueror may have considered the slaughter of non-combatants to be acceptable tactics against a ‘barbarian’ enemy he clearly regarded slave raiding to be both unacceptable and uncivilised even by his brutal standards.

There was, however, one very notable exception to William’s general policy of reconciliation toward the Anglo-Saxon nobility. In 1076 William had Waltheof, earl of Northumbria, executed for his part in a rebellion against the Conqueror’s rule. Waltheof had been earl of Huntingdon in Harold Godwineson’s pre-Conquest regime. In 1066 he had submitted to the Conqueror who had recognised his high-ranking status. However, in 1069 Waltheof allied himself with the English resistance and fought savagely against the Norman forces at York. Despite this disloyalty William forgave him and Waltheof, again, submitted to the king in 1070. Following this rebellion William attempted to integrate Waltheof into his own ‘civilised’ milieu. Just as the *Gesta Herewardi* relates that William had permitted Hereward to marry the widow of Earl Dolfin, Waltheof was given the hand of the Conqueror’s own niece, Judith. Following this union he received his patrimony, the

as the Durham chronicler remarked that he made a furious counter attack against the Scots and by employing “...slaughter and conflagration, he returned with great spoil.” (“*Peracta cæde et incendio cum magna præda revertitur.*”) Indeed, Gosptric’s use of traditional tactics appears to have backfired, somewhat, because his savagery was said to have so incensed King Malcolm that he ordered his men “...no longer to spare any of the English nation, but either to smite all to earth, or to carry them off captives under the yoke of perpetual slavery.” (“...*jussit suis ut nulli Angliæ gentis ulterius parcerent, sed omnes vel necando in terram funderent, vel captivando sub jugum perpetuæ servitutis abducerent.*”) *Historia Regum Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, vol. ii, T. Arnold (ed.) (London: Longman, 1885), p. 191, translation from Stevenson, *HKE*, p. 139. For a full analysis of the bloody nature of Northumbrian warfare in this period see R. Fletcher, *Bloodfeud: Murder and Revenge in Anglo-Saxon England* (London: The Penguin Press, 2002), pp. 163–194.

earldom of Northumbria, from his new lord. Unfortunately, William's attempt to bring Waltheof into the fold of the Norman elite was less successful than the one attributed to the fictional persona in the *Gesta Herewardi*. In 1075 Waltheof again became embroiled in a plot against the Conqueror along with several Norman earls. The plot was subsequently exposed and Waltheof was beheaded following a short period of imprisonment.³²³ The Conqueror's harsh treatment of the earl does appear to have been somewhat out of character. Waltheof's co-conspirator, Earl Roger of Hereford, avoided execution although he was condemned to a lengthy imprisonment. It is possible that William felt Waltheof's betrayal particularly keenly because he had welcomed the Englishman into his own family circle. Even more significantly, it appears that in spite of Waltheof's royal favour and his union to Judith he still failed to renounce the 'barbaric' practices of his Anglo-Saxon forebears. This is made clear by the Durham chronicler who relates that in 1073 Waltheof sent a large band of young warriors to massacre the sons and grandsons of Carl whilst they were feasting.³²⁴ Interestingly, Fletcher has suggested that Waltheof might have been provoked into instigating this violent act by insults from his old rivals concerning his intimate association with the new Norman elite.³²⁵ Yet, Waltheof's motivations will never truly be known for this was to be the final act of vengeance in what appears to be a generation-spanning vendetta. It was halted by the Conqueror's 'state' execution of Waltheof for treason. The close personal ties that William had cultivated with Waltheof appear to have made it extremely difficult for him not to dispose of the earl. It seems that William was obliged make an example of Waltheof or else risk becoming implicated in this traditional vendetta himself. Such an

³²³ Even though Waltheof had abandoned the rebellion and confessed all to the Conqueror. See F. Scott, "Earl Waltheof of Northumbria", *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 4th ser., 30, 1952, pp. 149–213, 204–205. See also A. Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1995), pp. 63–65 and Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 610–612.

³²⁴ The victims were slain in cold blood whilst they were eating. Moreover, this act was in direct revenge for the slaying of Waltheof's grandfather, Ealdred, who had been killed by Carl, see *HKE*, p. 145. For an account of this Northumbrian feud see *The Early Charters of Northern England and the North Midlands*, C.R. Hart (ed. and trans.) (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1975), pp. 143–150. See also Gillingham, "Introduction", pp. 41–42 and Fletcher, *Bloodfeud*, pp. 163–194.

³²⁵ Fletcher, *Bloodfeud*, pp. 188–189.

implication would surely have tarnished the Conqueror's self-image of piety and moderation in relation to reform-minded norms.³²⁶

The fate of earl Waltheof is, perhaps, indicative of the difficulties that were involved in attempting to modify the behaviour of the Anglo-Saxon warrior fraternity. In the decades following the Conquest the Norman elite were repeatedly forced to restrain their English subjects from exacting traditionally violent vengeance upon those nobles who rebelled against royal authority.³²⁷ Moreover, William's policy of reconciliation and assimilation was only applied to those individuals at the very top of Anglo-Saxon society. His violent ravages in the counties of Yorkshire, Cheshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire appear to have been a direct attempt to eradicate the warrior bands 'of middling rank' that had been operating out of wilderness bases in those regions.³²⁸ His scorched earth tactics appear to have been relatively successful in the short term. However, the Welsh chronicle the *Brut y Tywysogyon* informs us that raiding bands of 'Saxon warriors' were still operating from bases in Wales during the first decade of the twelfth century. The *Brut* relates that in 1109 discord had arisen between the Welsh leader, Madog ap Rhiddid of Powys, and Henry I

³²⁶ Gillingham, "Introduction", pp. 41–42. The *Vita Wulfstani* provides an interesting account revealing that ecclesiastical reformers were attempting to restrain the traditional English feud. The author, William of Malmesbury, relates that following a case of manslaughter the victim's five brothers clamoured for blood vengeance. Indeed, they appear to have entered into a kind of berserk frenzy as William relates that they "howled in such fury, hurled such threats, as would terrify anybody. For whose heart would not sink when he saw so many full grown men, so strong and fierce, seeking the head of one man... The death of their brother had so kindled their grief that they were entirely robbed of their humanity." ("qui pro nece germani tantas fremebant furias, tantas fulminabant minas; ut quemlibet exterrere possent. Quis enim non corde labaret; cum tot homines eui maturos, eosdemque robore audacissimos in capud unum assurgerere uideret... Tantis eos dolor interitus fraterni succenderat; ut totam sibi humanitatem adimerent.") Yet, William comments that Bishop Wulfstan's reforming zeal, subsequently, enabled him to summon the miraculous power with which to tame their frenzy and resolve the feud peacefully, *VWWM*, pp. 38–39, translation from Swanton, *TLE*, p. 122.

³²⁷ Gillingham, "Introduction", pp. 43–44.

³²⁸ See previous page, see also Reynolds, "Eadric Silvaticus", pp. 102–105. For a full, if not wholly convincing, discussion of the impact of the Norman conquest on the middling ranks of English society see Thomas, *English and Normans*, pp. 161–180. Thomas readily recognises that there were ethnic tensions between this stratum of English society and the Norman elite but, perhaps, underplays the level of these tensions and, indeed, the significance of English ethnic/cultural identity for this stratum.

...because of the robberies which the Saxons were committing upon their (i.e. the French) territory. And thence they were committing wrongs against the king and coming to Madog.³²⁹

Indeed, Madog appears to have shown remarkable solidarity with his English counterparts and he subsequently refused to hand them over to the king. Instead he chose to join forces with them and together with another traditional Welsh warrior, Owain ap Cadwgan, their collective war bands conducted widespread ravaging and slave raiding activities.³³⁰ It appears likely that whilst such groups continued to exist the threat of abduction and enslavement remained a real one.³³¹

Reconfiguring Norms of Power/Gender in Post-Conquest English Society

By the second quarter of the twelfth century the revised values which the Norman regime had introduced appear to have been tacitly assimilated by the English elite. By this time, English society had become a hybrid product of Norman-Frankish and Anglo-Saxon culture.³³² This cultural fusion stimulated the post-Conquest elite into forging a new and distinctly English identity founded firmly upon revised codes of warfare and behavioural norms expounded by the reform movement. This distinct identity is clearly evident in the writings of ecclesiastical scholars such as William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon and Ælred of Rievaulx.³³³ This identity was characterised by a progressive, 'civilised' and superior self-image that regarded the Anglo-Saxon past as a barbarous yet heroic period plagued by violence, sexual debauchery and brigandage.³³⁴ By contrast, these writers viewed their own society,

³²⁹ "...o achawes y lledradeu yd oed Saesson yn y wneuthur ar y tir. Ac odynd yd oedynt yn gwneuthur cameu yn erbyn y brenhin ac ynn dyuot at Uadauc." *ByT*, pp. 62–63. It is interesting that the Welsh chronicler was still able to differentiate between Saxon and Norman at this time. This may have been largely due to the distinctively traditional way in which this 'Saxon' band was behaving. Indeed, this was not the first time that a Saxon warrior fraternity had allied itself with a similar Welsh warband in order to fight the 'foreigners', see chapter 2.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 62–69.

³³¹ As we shall see the activities of the 'Celtic' warrior fraternities were to remain intimately linked with slave raiding activities during the first half of the twelfth century, see chapter 5.

³³² Thomas argues that assimilation of the Norman and English elites was complete by the end of Henry II's reign, Thomas, *English and Normans*, p. 69.

³³³ Gillingham, *English*, p. 99. See also Davies, *English Empire*, p. 34.

³³⁴ Gillingham, "Introduction", pp. 53–54, see note 219 above.

however optimistically, as one which favoured the values of chastity and clemency over public expressions of violence and virility. In addition, they regarded the slaying of noble opponents and slave taking activities which targeted non-combatants to be barbaric anachronisms. These 'enlightened' twelfth-century individuals felt that such unrestrained violence and brigandage should be severely punished by a centralised royal authority.³³⁵ Similar attitudes to these had clearly been evident amongst ecclesiastics during the late Anglo-Saxon period.³³⁶ Yet, such opinions had made little or no impact upon the behaviour of the English warrior elite until the decades following the Norman Conquest. The imposition of the William's Norman regime, therefore, acted as a significant catalyst for cultural change. It facilitated the enforcement of the reformers' norms and the dissemination the modified warrior values of the Frankish elite into English society. Within decades of the Conquest the conceptual world of Anglo-Saxon society had been dramatically altered forever.

The enforcement of the reformers' norms was therefore synonymous with the centralisation of political power. For the architects of the Peace of God movement endemic warfare, lawlessness, rape and slave-taking were all associated symptoms of a wider disruption of God's order; "a breach of the grand harmony of the universe on whose tranquillity, Augustine had said, the peace of all things depended."³³⁷ Such attitudes were certainly not new to English society; indeed, Anglo-Saxon authors like Wulfstan of York had regarded the prevalence of rape and the enslavement of free individuals as symbolic of a breakdown in order and contemporary Godlessness.³³⁸ Nevertheless, William's conquest of England was regarded by many contemporary ecclesiastics as a momentous watershed which acted as a much needed antidote to these kinds of sinful disruptions. The Conqueror's status and the emergence of state power were dramatically boosted by the ideological sanction of the Church authorities. As Moore has convincingly contended,

When royal and princely power began to be reasserted in the later eleventh century responsibility for enforcing the Peace of God, together with the Truce of God... was again assumed by secular princes. The most forceful of them, William of Normandy, proclaimed it at the Councils of Caen

³³⁵ For example, see *GRA*, pp. 738–741, *HA*, pp. 773–777.

³³⁶ Especially in the writings of Archbishop Wulfstan of York.

³³⁷ Moore, *Revolution*, p. 10.

³³⁸ Coleman, "Rape", p. 195.

in 1047 and Lillebonne in 1080, thus reintegrating it into the array of prerogatives which he wielded so vigorously as Duke of Normandy and King of England.³³⁹

Thus a significant shift in cultural perceptions in conjunction with the development of monarchical state power drastically reduced the social significance of slavery during the twelfth century. The acceptance of the reformers' norms regarding sexual behaviour, not only diminished the master's power over his slave but, also the prestigious nature of slave owning in general. The decline of illegitimate heirship and the imposition of a more centralised rule limited internecine violence and significantly reduced the opportunities for slave raiding. More importantly, the acceptance and adoption of revised codes in warfare meant that such activities were no longer considered to be an affirmation of an individual's power and manly prowess. In addition, the notion of legitimacy had come to supersede more traditional social distinctions based upon the dichotomy between slavery and freedom. All of these changes were symptomatic of an even more fundamental alteration in the way gender was constructed, defined and related to expressions of power.

During the final decades of the eleventh century a change was occurring in the way *raptus* or rape was conceived within western Christendom. *Raptus* had traditionally been a term that defined an abduction of any kind irrespective of sexual motive.³⁴⁰ However, following a judgement given in Ivo of Chartres' (1091–1116) influential canonical compilation, the *Decretum*, rape came to be specifically associated within ecclesiastical legal texts with sexual violation.³⁴¹ By sanctioning this judgement, then, the ecclesiastical authorities, thereby, acknowledged that consent to sexual intercourse had become the central factor in determining the crime of *raptus*. The issue of consent was also important for determining the subsequent severity of the punishment meted out to the offender. Indeed, during the second half of the eleventh century the penalties imposed by canon lawyers for committing sexual crimes had become increasingly severe. They included excommunication, *infamia*

³³⁹ Moore, *Revolution*, p. 8. See also Bennett, "Violence", p. 138 for evidence to support this.

³⁴⁰ Brundage, "Rape", pp. 62–75 and *LSCS*, p. 209.

³⁴¹ Ivo cited a letter from Pope Urban II (1088–1099) as the inspiration for this judgement on rape, Brundage, *LSCS*, pp. 209 and 249.

and a strict prohibition against the offender marrying the victim.³⁴² These revised ecclesiastical judgements differed from their secular equivalents in one important aspect. Secular law had been primarily concerned with the insult that the crime of rape had inflicted upon the victim's male guardians. Paradoxically, the new canonical law codes considered *raptus* to be a personal offence against the victim herself.³⁴³ This alteration in the legal conception of rape coincided strikingly with the more general modification in warrior behaviour resulting from the imposition of the revised codes of conduct expounded by the reform movement. One significant consequence of this change in behavioural norms was that marriage by abduction and ravishment became much less prestigious in the eyes of the elite. Brundage has remarked that by the twelfth century secular authorities appear to have been far less concerned about forcible rape than their predecessors had. He feels that potential suitors were adopting less violent, more subtle means of securing their goal.

Where such a suitor a century earlier might have abducted the woman and pressed his suit by force and intimidation, early twelfth-century males seem to have been more inclined to resort to charm, blandishments, and acts of valour to win over the lady's heart. Ravishment was giving way to seduction as the preferred method of capturing an heiress against her family's wishes.³⁴⁴

Yet, this reduction in sexual violence was, paradoxically, accompanied by a more general degradation in the social standing of women during this period. Women increasingly became the victims of the new hostility towards sexuality that emanated from the Gregorian reform movement.³⁴⁵ As greater restrictions were imposed upon male sexual activities so, also, did women increasingly bear the responsibility for sexual infractions.³⁴⁶ The increasingly stringent rules regarding clerical celibacy gave rise to a crisis in masculine identity which not only affected

³⁴² Ibid., Indeed, these penalties were even more severe if the woman had been betrothed or if she was a nun.

³⁴³ Ibid., A clear distinction was now drawn between forced rape and seduction through guile and promises, *ibid.* pp. 249–250. It should be noted that Hough has argued that in the ninth West Saxon *Domboc* code of Alfred the Great compensation for rape was payable to the female victim, see chapter 2.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., see also above.

³⁴⁵ Jochens, "Illicit Love", p. 390.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

the clergy but which also had significant implications for the warrior elite. This phenomenon has been previously outlined by McNamara.

Psychologically, manhood itself was at stake. Men without women, if deprived of sexuality, came dangerously close to traditional visions of femininity. Celibacy deprived its practitioners of the necessary "other" upon which to construct a gender persona. Engaging in sex, if only in the sense of boasting to their men and joining with them in a common celebration of the physical subordination of women, was necessary to the construction of masculinity.³⁴⁷

This crisis in identity, then, gave rise to a virulent strain of misogyny that was to have a profound cultural impact upon society. Women were increasingly associated with insatiable sexuality, sinfulness and temptation. Thus, through their systematic defilement of women, the reformers attempted to coax and cajole the clergy into a life of celibacy.³⁴⁸

Yet, if celibacy could provide an avenue to power then surely chaste women might have equal access to that power?³⁴⁹ The reformers, therefore, inevitably portrayed women as possessing an intrinsically sinful nature which made it impossible for them to control their sexual urges and maintain a vow of chastity.³⁵⁰ This innate inability to remain chaste, thereby, inhibited the feminine capacity for power holding. Consequently, the reforming ecclesiasts increasingly viewed women as treacherous, weak and polluting.³⁵¹ They, therefore, felt that it was essential that the social roles of women be curtailed and strictly controlled in order to limit their corrupting influence upon men.³⁵² This intensely misogynistic attitude, which de-emphasised both the agency and the activities of women, can be seen to permeate the narratives of twelfth-century England.³⁵³ William of Malmesbury's hagiographical

³⁴⁷ McNamara, "*Herrenfrage*", p. 8.

³⁴⁸ M.W. Kaufman, "The conception of Women in the Middle ages and the Renaissance", *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, lvi. 2, 1973, p. 143 quotation from Barstow, *Married Priests*, p. 179. See also McNamara, "*Herrenfrage*", pp. 3–29, Miller, "Masculinity", pp. 25–52.

³⁴⁹ McNamara, "*Herrenfrage*", p. 6 and J.A. McNamara, "An Unresolved Syllogism: The search for a Christian Gender System" in J. Murray (ed.), *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the medieval West* (New York/London: Garland, 1999), pp. 1–24, 8–11, 16–17.

³⁵⁰ Barstow, *Married Priests*, p. 179, McNamara, "*Herrenfrage*", p. 6.

³⁵¹ Indeed, those very same qualities that traditional societies had attributed to the 'feminine' slave.

³⁵² Barstow, *Married Priests*, p. 179.

³⁵³ Coss, *Lady*, p. 29.

Vita Wulfstani provides us with an excellent example of this. William relates that early in Wulfstan's career the bishop had faced a great temptation for he had been approached by an attractive noblewoman who attempted to seduce him. She had begun by fondling his clothing shamelessly, which he arrested with a dirty look. Following this outrage she "...began to whisper to the saintly man words that urged wickedness, coaxing and feminine but imbued with the deceit of the serpent."³⁵⁴ The innocent Wulfstan was oblivious to her lascivious advances and took her interest in him to be a sign that she wished to take the veil. Yet, when he suggested this to her,

...she retorted what she wanted and begged was that the provost should relax his strictness a little and deign to share her bed. It was a slight sin, if any at all, to enjoy the embrace of a woman.³⁵⁵

However, once she had clarified her intentions in this way,

The prior could tolerate it no more, but making the sign of the cross he interrupted her chatter: "Be gone," he cried, "with the hatred you deserve, you fuel of lust, daughter of death, vessel of Satan!" He followed this upbraiding with a box on the ear which, in his zeal for chastity, he delivered with such force on the yelping little woman's face, that the sound of the smack was heard outside the doors of the church.³⁵⁶

This was not the first occasion on which William felt the saint had been tempted by the evil wiles of a woman. He also relates that during Wulfstan's youth a young peasant girl had danced lewdly in front of him with the deliberate intention of despoiling his chastity. The saint was said to have been so aroused by the girl's display that he was forced to dampen his ardour by rolling around naked in some prickly bushes!³⁵⁷

It is true that accounts of saints avoiding sexual contact had been a commonplace phenomenon in medieval hagiography for centuries.

³⁵⁴ "...sermones male suosos, femineisque blandiciis set uipereis dolis infectos, sancto uiro assibila.", *VWWM*, p. 12, translation from Swanton, *TLL*, p. 99.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.* "*Quin immo se hoc optare et orare; ut paululum prepositi rigore inflexo, suum dignaretur cubile. Leue uel nullum peccatum esse, si femineo potiatu amplexu.*"

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.* "*Non tulit prior ulterius; set loquentis uoce interrupta, pretentoque fronti crucis signaculo; fuge inquit cum eo quo digna es odio, fomes laciue, mortis filia, uas Sathane. Verba increpatoria, subsecuta est alapa; quam ille zelo castitatis, faciei muliercule gannientis tanto nisu infregit; ut illise crepitus palme, ualuas etiam exiret ecclesie.*" *The Life of St. Ubaldu*s provides a strong continental parallel for this tale, see Miller, "Masculinity", p. 48.

³⁵⁷ *TLL*, pp. 94-95.

Yet, William of Malmesbury's *Vita Wulfstani* does adopt a particularly vociferous anti-feminine/aescetic tone which characterises many texts which issued forth from this twelfth-century reforming milieu. Indeed, attitudes such as William's are clearly indicative of a significant cultural shift away from traditional Germanic constructions of gender.³⁵⁸ Such twelfth-century narratives indicate that there was an increasing demarcation taking place between the social roles and expected behavioural norms assumed by men and women.³⁵⁹ This demarcation was both stimulated and further emphasised by the acceptance of reform codes regarding monogamy and the subsequent restructuring of inheritance patterns around the lines of patrilinear descent.³⁶⁰ The divisions that were drawn between masculine and feminine roles became increasingly formalised. One of the consequences of this was that women were increasingly excluded from positions of power and the exercising of both public and military authority came to be viewed as exclusively masculine spheres.³⁶¹ Of course, power holding had always been a predominantly male affair in Anglo-Saxon England. However, this revised twelfth-century construction of gender differed from the Anglo-Saxon construction in one significant aspect; power was no longer regarded as a condition that was based upon the winnable and loseable attributes expressed through masculine traits and ideals. As a consequence it became increasingly difficult for women to obtain power through the strategy of appropriating masculine characteristics.

A significant revision in the conception of gender is also evident from attitudes towards acceptable masculine behaviour. Indeed, the reformers' misogynistic attitude towards women was merely the by-product of a far more profound struggle regarding the ideals and behavioural norms associated with masculinity.

The reformers vilification of women did harm women, but... was rooted in the clerical construction of an alternative masculinity, one that was envisaged as more powerful and more deserving of power because it was

³⁵⁸ McNamara, "*Herrenfrage*", p. 3.

³⁵⁹ Coss, *Lady*, p. 29.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 22–23.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30 and McNamara, "*Herrenfrage*", p. 11 and "Unresolved", p. 9. Indeed, it would be difficult to imagine the royal concubine Ælfgifu of Northampton achieving a similar position of social prominence and prestige during the second quarter of the twelfth century. For many examples of the discussions regarding the general debasement of women's position within English society during the twelfth century see, Moore, "Domesday Slavery", p. 220, note 84.

not weakened by association with the weaker sex... the reformer's sharpest invective was mobilized to censure their supposed emasculation of clerical males through their devouring lust. Real men are not involved with women. The audience for this discourse is not women, it is men.³⁶²

This struggle, highlighted so convincingly by Miller, is clearly evident from the reform attempts to discourage and discredit traditional expressions of masculinity and power through a revised construction of gender norms. Noblemen who expressed their wealth and virility through bodily adornments and flowing hairstyles that had traditionally been viewed as an outward expression of masculinity were now castigated for being sodomites and homosexuals.³⁶³ Moreover, the twelfth-century ecclesiastical commentators increasingly portrayed traditionally violent, manhood-affirming warrior behaviour as an indication of wantonness and effeminacy.³⁶⁴ Orderic Vitalis vehemently condemned the behaviour of the lawless and degenerate 'youths' (*iuuenum*) who surrounded the Conqueror's eldest son, Robert Curthose, and plundered his Norman duchy.³⁶⁵ Orderic related a prophecy that had allegedly been made by a certain holy hermit from Germany that stated:

...in Robert's duchy catamites and effeminates will govern, and under their rule vice and wretchedness will abound. Towns and villages will be burned; monasteries and holy men will be wantonly defiled... and many thousands of men will be destroyed.³⁶⁶

³⁶² Miller, "Masculinity", pp. 49–50.

³⁶³ For examples see John of Salisbury, *Pol.* (Nederman), lib. iv, pp. 112–113, *GRA*, p. 459, *OV*, vol. iii, p. 22, see also R. Bartlett, "Symbolic Meanings of Hair in the Middle Ages", *TRHS*, 6th ser., iv, 1994, pp. 43–60, 44, 46, 50–54.

³⁶⁴ "...symbols of actions permissible to the laity and forbidden to the clergy became polluting in the clerical sphere. Bloodshed had its proper place in the lay world, for example, but blood defiled the clergy. More important, intercourse between clerics and women, and so in some instances the presence of women themselves in the lives of clerics, became polluting... These "pollution taboos" applied also to the laity." Wertheimer, "Children of Disorder", pp. 394–395.

³⁶⁵ Orderic described Curthose's followers as "men of diabolical pride and ferocity terrible to their neighbours, always far too ready to plunge into acts of lawlessness." ("*...militari probitate isignes, superbia immanes, feritate contrariis hostibus terribiles, ac ad arduum nefas inchoandum nimis procaces.*") Orderic was particularly condemnatory of Curthose's regime because his monastery of St. Evroult had suffered oppression during his reign. *OV*, vol. iii, pp. 102–103, 110–111.

³⁶⁶ "*In ducatu Rodberti catamite et effeminati dominabunter sub quorum dominatione nequitia et miseria grassabuntur. Vrbes et villæ cremabuntur, basilicæ sanctorum temere uiolabuntur... hominumque multa milia ferro uel flamma perimentur.*" Ibid. pp. 106–107. The author of the *Gesta Stephani* similarly equated the warrior ravages of King Stephen's reign with sexual debauchery, see *GS*, pp. 153, 185–187. Moreover, John of Salisbury also displays a similar attitude towards such behaviour see *Pol.* (Nederman), lib. vi, pp. 112–113.

In a similar manner, those warriors who followed active female lords were no longer considered to be true men. The *Gesta Stephani* called into question the masculinity of the Empress Mathilda's followers whom he described as "...effeminate men, whose endowment lay rather in wanton delights than in resolution of mind."³⁶⁷

It is difficult to ascertain just how far such ecclesiastical attitudes impacted upon the mores of the warrior fraternity. Yet, it is clear that many practices which had traditionally been associated with the affirmation of masculinity and power were undergoing a dramatic modification during the twelfth century. The prestigious nature of female accumulation and abduction were significantly reduced and violent expressions of sexual jealousy curtailed by reform norms. Internecine strife and vengeance killings had been rendered 'uncivilised' by the imposition of revised codes of conduct in sexual relations and warfare. In addition, slave raiding was no longer considered to be a prestigious pastime which emphasised an individual's power and masculine prowess. By the middle of the twelfth century the English elite had come to view such activities as cowardly and barbaric. This alteration in perceptions towards slaving raiding is indicative of a deeper and more dramatic reduction in the significance of the institution of slavery in general. Indeed, the condition of slavery had ceased to be a powerful cultural distinction within English society. In the wake of the social changes that had followed the Norman Conquest the symbolic act of enslavement had lost much of its cultural potency.

A seismic shift in the way masculinity was constructed meant that conceptions of power were no longer founded upon winnable and loseable attributes associated with traditional warrior norms of prowess and virility.³⁶⁸ This significantly reduced the symbolic significance of slavery because it undermined the conceptual feminisation of enslaved males. This conceptual change may help to explain the increased prevalence of castration as a punishment within the English laws following the

³⁶⁷ "...uiri molles et deliciis magis quam animi fortitudine affluentes." *GS*, pp. 118–119. Similarly, John of Salisbury felt that the Carthaginians had fallen into slavery because "vice took root in a female lord, the effeminate citizens were led away by the neck by men of valour." ("*Sed quia uitium in muliere domina radicauit, effeminati ciues subduxerunt colla uirtuti.*") This is an interesting tract because John clearly felt that the Carthaginian citizens had been feminised not by enslavement but because they had allowed a woman to lead them. See *Poli*. (Webb), vol ii, lib vi, p. 66 translation from Nederman, p. 132.

³⁶⁸ See also McNamara, "Unresolved", pp. 6–17.

Conquest.³⁶⁹ State enforced physical emasculation, under the auspices of William's Truce of God, thereby replaced the social emasculation of slavery as a means to punish offenders.³⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the association between servility and femininity did not disappear. It was further reinforced by the ecclesiastical authorities' increasingly negative attitude towards women. With this in mind, let us now return to examine canonical the judgement made by the Council of Westminster quoted at the very beginning of this chapter and examine it afresh. The reforming canon begins by stating that

The concubines of priests and canons shall be expelled from the parish, unless they have contracted a lawful marriage there.³⁷¹

This makes it clear that the ecclesiastical authorities considered clerical celibacy, legitimate marriage and monogamy to be fundamentally important for defining status and social inclusion. They, therefore, emphasised this by employing the traditionally powerful distinction made between the slave and the free individual.

If they are found afterwards offending, they shall be arrested by the officers of the church, in whatever lordship they may be; and we command, under pain of excommunication, that they... be subjected to ecclesiastical discipline, or reduced to slavery, according to the sentence of the bishop.³⁷²

The authorities, thereby, condoned the enslavement of free women by the Church because they had engaged in immoral sexual behaviour

³⁶⁹ K. van Eickels, "Gendered Violence: Castration and Blinding as Punishment for Treason in Normandy and Anglo-Norman England", *Gender & History*, vol. 16, 3, November, 2004, pp. 588–602, 590.

³⁷⁰ The final two articles in the *Ten Articles of William the Conqueror* make this clear as they prohibit the selling of men and the slaying of offenders noting that instead "his eyes shall be put out and he shall suffer castration." ("*sed eruantur oculi et testiculi abscondantur*") see *Ten Articles of William I, 9 & 10, Die Gesetze*, p. 488. As we've seen, in the Old English laws castration had only been prescribed for serious sexual offences committed by slaves. See also *HA*, pp. 406–407. The Conqueror's laws appear to have ended the creation of the Anglo-Saxon *witeþeow* or penal slaves. That is with the notable exception of clerical concubines! For further discussion of the employment of castration as a punishment by the Anglo-Norman state see, van Eickels, "Gendered Violence", pp. 588–602.

³⁷¹ "*Concubine vero presbiterorum et canonicorum, nisi ibi legitime nupserint, extra parochiam expellantur.*" *CES*, vol. i, pt. ii, p. 748.

³⁷² *Ibid.* "*Quod si postea culpabiles invente fuerint, in cuiusvis territorio invente fuerint, a ministris ecclesie capiantur. Et sub excommunicatione precipimus ne ab aliqua potestate maiore vel minore detineantur, sed libere eisdem ministris ecclesie tradantur et ecclesiastice discipline vel servituti episcopali iudicio mancipentur.*" The policy of enslaving clerical concubines was first enacted by Pope Leo in 1049 in regard to Roman clerics whose concubines were forced into servitude in the Lateran palace, see Brundage, *LSCS*, p. 218.

with clerics. This judgement clearly takes an extremely negative view of women, yet it is equally indicative of the increasing bitterness of the ideological conflict between those who adhered to traditional expressions of masculine power and those who wished to impose the norms of the reforming papacy. By the imposition of this judgement the Church was sending a clear message that illegitimacy and immorality were to be associated with a complete loss of power. Indeed, the concubines not only lost their freedom but, they also became symbolically tainted with the sexual accessibility and pollution associated with servile status. This, then, was a bitterly ironical punishment because it deliberately evoked traditional sensibilities regarding male guardianship and sexual jealousy in order to dishonour those uncompliant clerics who refused to adopt the reformers' revised norms. By doing this the Council was emphasising that chastity was now the only true avenue to spiritual/social power. This judgement, then, is clearly illustrative of a revised construction of gender in which the traditional parameters of masculine behaviour were redefined and which, simultaneously, regarded women as a separate and distinct threat to masculine authority. Indeed, the authorities appear to have felt that they were emancipating the offending clerics from their concubines.³⁷³ This is made evident by the fact that only the women were to be punished with slavery. As for the offending clerics, they may have lost their masculine honour but they did not lose their freedom.

The Westminster judgement also reveals the increasingly confident manner with which the reformers were able to prosecute their campaign for clerical celibacy. By 1125 they clearly had the legal and administrative means with which to impose their norms upon ecclesiastical society in England. In the two decades following the departure of Archbishop Anselm from the see of Canterbury the English ecclesiastical hierarchy appears to have once again lapsed into a fairly relaxed attitude towards clerical concubinage.³⁷⁴ Three successive councils held at London in 1125, 1127, and 1129 constitute a direct reaction to this laxity. These councils sought to impose new legislation regarding clerical celibacy that had been enacted by Pope Calixtus II at Rheims in 1119. Furthermore, the severe punishments handed out at the council of Westminster appear to have been vigorously enforced. Henry of Huntingdon, a vehement

³⁷³ Brundage, *LSCS*, pp. 214–219.

³⁷⁴ See M. Clanchy, *England and its Rulers 1066–1272* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), pp. 101–103.

opponent of clerical celibacy, commented with bitterness concerning the hypocrisy of the papal legate John of Crema who was in England attempting to enforce the new rules. Henry remarked that he

...dealt with wives of priests very severely... Yet having created the body of Christ that same day he was caught after vespers with a whore.³⁷⁵

The stringent enforcement of the reformers' norms clearly inhibited the hereditary transmission of ecclesiastical appointments. In addition, it significantly reduced the number of clerical concubines in England by the end of the twelfth century.³⁷⁶ Yet, the enforcement and acceptance of the reformers' norms not only modified attitudes and practices within the Church, they also impacted upon secular society too especially amongst the elite. Following in the footsteps of Edward the Confessor and William I, powerful individuals within the secular world increasingly attempted to project a self image of sexual continence and piety. Despite fathering a drove of illegitimate children by a number of concubines, the Conqueror's son, Henry I, clearly wished to be presented as a ruler who followed in his father's footsteps of royal sexual temperance. This is evident from William of Malmesbury's attempt to place a positive spin on Henry's prolific sexual activities which he argued were conducted out of royal duty rather than lasciviousness!

All his life he was completely free from fleshly lusts, indulging in the embraces of the female sex (as I have heard from those who know) from love of begetting children and not to gratify his passions; for he thought it beneath his dignity to comply with extraneous gratification, unless the royal seed could fulfil its natural purpose; employing his bodily functions as their master, not obeying his lust as its slave.³⁷⁷

William's account makes it clear that the twelfth-century kings of England continued to gratify their carnal urges with concubines and

³⁷⁵ "...cum igitur concilio seuerissime de uxoribus sacerdotum tractasset... cum eadem die corpus Christi confecisset, cum meretice post vesperam interceptus est." *HA*, pp. 472–475. This story is also related by the *Annals of Winchester* which note that John was deliberately lured into this compromising situation by the womanising bishop, Ranulf Flambard. Indeed, Ranulf is said to have arranged for one of his nieces to seduce the papal legate and then at the crucial moment be caught in the act! See *The Annals of Winchester, Annales Monastici*, vol. ii, pp. 47–48. See also Aird, *St. Cuthbert*, pp. 177–178.

³⁷⁶ Barstow, *Married Priests*, pp. 96–97.

³⁷⁷ "Ominum tota uita omnino obscenitatum cupidinearum expers, quoniam, ut a consciis accepimus, non effreni uoluptate sed gignendae prolis amore mulierum gremio infuderetur, ne dignaretur aduenae delectationi prebere assensum, nisi ubi regium semen procedere posset in effectum effundens naturam ut dominus, non obtemperans libidini ut famulus." *GRA*, pp. 744–755. Once again the medieval association between slavery and sexual corruption is readily apparent.

courtesans just as their Anglo-Saxon predecessors had done.³⁷⁸ Moreover, if the entries in the bishops' registers are to be believed then many priests within the English parish clergy continued to maintain concubines during the later half of the twelfth century.³⁷⁹ Similarly, practices of female accumulation and the sexual exploitation of slave women did not disappear from the great households of England.³⁸⁰ However, although many of the practices associated with traditional Anglo-Saxon expressions of masculinity and power appear to have been maintained, they were conducted henceforth in a far more informal and covert manner. Such behaviour was no longer considered to be as prestigious or power affirming in a public sense. It did not sit well with the superior and civilised self-image that the English elite had begun to create for themselves during the first half of the twelfth century.³⁸¹ This revised English identity was founded upon a set of behavioural norms extrapolated from the Gregorian reform/Peace of God movements and the associated codes of warfare imported from Northern France. Through the imposition of these norms unrestrained violence, sexual incontinence and slave taking activities had come to be viewed as barbaric and anachronistic practices which had been eradicated from English society as a result of the Conquest. This superior ideology was defined and maintained in direct opposition towards those communities within medieval Britain which did continue to adhere to these more traditional behavioural norms. This ideology was to give rise to a vehement cultural antipathy between the communities of England and her 'Celtic' neighbours during the twelfth century; this cultural antipathy would ultimately lead to conflict and conquest. We shall see in the next chapter how conflicting ideals regarding slavery and slave taking were to be at the very heart of that antipathy.

³⁷⁸ See above.

³⁷⁹ Barstow, *Married Priests*, p. 96. Although this was only now the case amongst priests at the bottom of the hierarchical ladder. For a parallel situation in Normandy see Thibodeaux, "Man of the Church".

³⁸⁰ Stuard, "Ancillary", pp. 3–28.

³⁸¹ This is made clear by William of Malmesbury's portrayal of Henry I's sex life, see above.

CHAPTER FIVE

SLAVERY AND CULTURAL ANTIPATHY

In the preceding chapters, I have highlighted how slavery was an ancient institution of some cultural significance for the societies of medieval Britain. Furthermore, during the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries the sources register a remarkable upsurge in reports of slave raiding activities within the ‘Celtic’ regions of the British Isles.¹ The timing of this upsurge might, initially, appear surprising given that there was a growing antipathy towards such activities within English society following the Norman Conquest. Modern historians have attributed the high incidence of ‘Celtic’ slave raiding within this period to the corrupting influence of Scandinavian settlers within the Irish Sea region.² In order to support this contention they have pointed to the increasing number of collaborative enterprises undertaken by mixed native and Scandinavian war bands in the ‘Celtic’ regions.³ Yet, this explanation fails to acknowledge the longstanding cultural significance of the institution of slavery within these native communities. Indeed, slave-holding and slave-taking were of fundamental importance for conceptions of power, ethnic/community identity and norms of gender within these warrior-centred societies. When this is taken into consideration then the notion that native war bands, comprising of naive and easily corrupted Christian individuals, had been exploited by pagan Viking sensibilities appears less convincing. The predominant reason for the alliance of ‘Celtic’ and Norse warrior fraternities were that both groups had similar social objectives and motivations; both occupied a similar

¹ Holm, “Slave Trade”, pp. 317–345, 341, Wyatt, “Gruffudd”, pp. 595–617, see also Pelteret, *Slavery*, pp. 78–79.

² Ó Croínín, *Medieval Ireland*, pp. 268–269, Holm, “Slave Trade”, p. 330, Bromberg, “Wales Slave Trade”, pp. 263–272, 263. A similar contention has been made regarding the Scandinavian influence upon Anglo-Saxon society, see Fisher, *Anglo-Saxon Age*, p. 333. For other examples see Wyatt, “Significance”, p. 329.

³ C. Etchingam, *Viking Raids on Irish Church Settlements in the Ninth Century* (Maynooth: St. Patrick’s College, Department of Old and Middle Irish, 1996), p. 49, Holm, “Slave Trade”, p. 328, Bromberg, “Wales Slave Trade”, pp. 263–264, 269, Wyatt, “Gruffudd”, pp. 595–617.

conceptual world that related expressions of masculinity with physical and social power.

It was certainly true that Scandinavian raiders and traders were heavily involved in the medieval slave trade. Through their maritime connections they appear to have established an efficient slave supply system that fed lucrative market places across North Western Europe.⁴ The Scandinavians thereby established a maritime network that allowed warriors from a number of ethnic groups to 'shunt' slaves on to new locations. The Irish Sea region appears to have been particularly suitable for such an operation. The fragmented nature of the 'Celtic' polities together with the extensive coastlines bordering the Irish Sea facilitated the slave raiding activities of both 'Celtic' and Norse warrior fraternities. These warrior groups captured slaves as a means to assert their power over rival neighbouring territories. They were then able to isolate and alienate their victims from the vicinity of their origin communities by transporting them to the Scandinavian slave market places. By removing these individuals from their social milieu and shipping them abroad the slave raiders significantly reduced their motivations for escape and thus facilitated the process of subjection which, in turn, may have increased their value.⁵ The Scandinavian markets provided a venue at which human beings could be exchanged for silver, exotic goods or for more compliant foreign slaves. Native warriors, therefore, supplied slaves for the elaborate Scandinavian trade network, acting in a not dissimilar manner to the West African middlemen of the New World slave trade.⁶

Some modern historians have argued that the continuing significance of slave raiding and slave trading in the 'Celtic' regions during this period provides evidence that these societies were languishing in the

⁴ Wyatt, "Gruffudd", pp. 601–602.

⁵ The late eleventh-century text *Lebor Na Cert* reveals the prestigious value attributed to foreign female slaves within Irish society, see *LnC* pp. 41, 69, 99. The early medieval Irish law codes also note that a higher value was placed upon foreign slaves, see *ALI*, vol. v, p. 111, see also Chapter 2. The Welsh *Law of Hywel Dda* reveals that the same was true in Welsh society, *LHD* p. 167. Similarly, Scottish slave raiders in the twelfth century are said to have sold their English captives on to other "barbarians" (presumably Norseman or other Scotsmen from the North) in exchange for cattle ("...vel pro vaccis aliis barbaris vendiderunt."), Richard of Hexham, *CRSHR*, vol. iii, p. 157.

⁶ Patterson, *Social Death*, p. 154. See also R. Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: from Baroque to the Modern 1492–1800* (London/New York: Verso, 1997), p. 327.

economic backwaters of Europe.⁷ It may be true that the economies of this region were less developed than, say, the economies of England or France during this period. Yet, it is extremely dangerous to use the existence of slavery as a yardstick by which to measure the level of this economic stagnation. By doing this modern historians reveal more about their own post-abolitionist mindsets than they do about the twelfth-century economies of the Irish Sea regions. We have seen that arguments that regard slavery to be an economically degenerative institution have been discredited within the recent discourse concerning plantation slavery in the early-modern period.⁸ Similarly, attitudes that view slavery to be an unprofitable institution, which was incompatible with the growth of the medieval economy, find little support in the historical record.⁹ Within many medieval European societies slave ownership was an expression of an individual's power, prowess and virility. Although slave labour may not have been a significant factor in medieval modes of production, slaves were important symbols of prestige and consequently the slave trade was extremely lucrative. The profitable nature of this trade was clearly recognised by contemporary medieval commentators. William of Malmesbury remarked that following the Conquest of England the reform-minded Archbishop Lanfranc and Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester, had to persuade William I to suppress the sale of Christian souls from England into Ireland. It seems that the Conqueror had initially been reluctant to prohibit this trade because he had "...enjoyed a share of the profits from this traffic."¹⁰

Lanfranc's and Wulfstan's concerns regarding the bustling slave trade with Ireland were probably well founded. Dublin appears to have been the beating heart of the slave supply network during the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries.¹¹ Archaeological excavations in the city

⁷ For example, Gillingham has remarked that "in the less developed economies of the Celtic lands slavery continued to flourish." See "Conquering", pp. 72–73. See also Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales 1146–1223* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 162 for further examples see Wyatt, "Significance", pp. 332–335.

⁸ See chapter 1 and Wyatt, "Significance", p. 335.

⁹ Ibid., see also McCormick, "New Light", pp. 17–54.

¹⁰ "...qui regem pro commodo uenialitatis quod sibi pensitabitur..." *GRA*, pp. 497–498, William of Malmesbury also noted that Earl Godwine's wife had made a vast fortune from trafficking attractive young female slaves from England to Denmark, *ibid.*, p. 363.

¹¹ Holm, "Slave Trade", H. Clark and B. Ambrosiani, *Towns in the Viking-Age* (Leicester/London: Leicester University Press, 1991), p. 168, A. Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin* (Dublin: Templekieran Press, 1975), vol. ii, pp. 240–242, R. Power, "Magnus Bareleg's Expedition to the West", *SHR*, 65, 1986, pp. 107–132, 123, P.F.

have revealed the extraordinary wealth generated there during this period.¹² The Irish adoption of coinage (even if for limited purposes) in the native kingdoms near to Dublin, reveals the significant economic impact of the Hiberno-Norse settlements upon the native economy.¹³ What is more, the increasing wealth of Dublin attracted the attention of the native Irish rulers. During the eleventh century over-lordship of the city became a prestigious and coveted title within Irish society.¹⁴ Any provincial king who wished to claim high kingship had to assert his control over this significant port and slave market.¹⁵ In 1052 Diarmait mac Maíl na mBó, king of Leinster, went one step further and assumed direct control over the city. Following this Diarmait and the subsequent Irish rulers of Dublin became increasingly involved in Irish Sea maritime operations that included extensive slave raiding activities upon the Scottish and Welsh coastlines. The lucrative nature of control over the Irish-Sea slave trade is revealed by the expedition of Magnus Barelegs, king of Norway (d. 1102) in 1098.¹⁶ In this year Magnus sailed west from Norway with a large fleet and his intention appears to have been to establish control over maritime trade routes in the Irish Sea region. He used his forces to ravage and then secure control over the Western Isles, Man and parts of Galloway. Furthermore, he made an alliance with the ruler of Dublin and may well have exercised political hegemony over the city for a brief period. Magnus appears to have deliberately attempted to halt the post-Conquest English advance into North Wales. In 1098 he attacked and successfully repelled the combined forces of Hugh of Chester and Hugh of Shrewsbury who were trying to secure control over the island of Anglesey. Magnus appears to have been aware that, if consolidated, their territorial gains in North Wales might pose a direct threat to prospective slave raiding activities there.¹⁷ Moreover, following the native Irish assumption of control over the city of Dublin we see an intensification of slave raiding activities within Ireland during

Wallace, "Archaeology and the Emergence of Dublin" in J. Bradley (ed.), *Settlement and Society in Medieval Ireland* (Kilkenny: Boethius, 1988), pp. 123–160, 158, Wyatt, "Gruffudd", p. 602.

¹² Clark and Ambrosiani, *Towns*, pp. 104–106, Wallace, "Archaeology", pp. 123–160.

¹³ M. Gerriets, "Money among the Irish: coin hoards in Viking-Age Ireland", *JRSAL*, 115 (1985) pp. 121–139 at p. 125.

¹⁴ Wallace, "Archaeology", p. 159.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁶ Power, "Magnus", pp. 107–132.

¹⁷ Wyatt, "Gruffudd", pp. 609–614.

the final half of the eleventh century.¹⁸ The contemporary evidence for such insular Irish slave raiding would appear to undermine the argument that the medieval Irish slave trade may be explained away by the external exploitation of a small community of Hiberno-Norse raiders and traders.

Nevertheless, Scandinavian influence does appear to have acted as a catalyst stimulating the slave economies of the societies of medieval Britain. The absence of a centralised money economy within the 'Celtic' regions does not appear to have negated the increasing utilisation of recycled coinage within these communities neither did it prevent their cultivation of wide-ranging trading contacts.¹⁹ The increasingly lucrative nature of the slave market within these regions is indicated by the direct involvement of the 'Celtic' royal elites in raiding and trading for slaves. Irish, Welsh and Scottish kings appear to have indulged in such large scale raiding activities during the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries that they became noteworthy for the contemporary chroniclers.²⁰ This intensification of slave raiding activity in the Irish Sea region coincided significantly with the more general western European trends towards economic growth during this period.²¹ The contention that slavery was an economically degenerative institution practised only by economically 'backward' societies must, therefore, be called into question.²² Indeed, the complex and dynamic nature of the slave

¹⁸ The Irish annalists reveal an apparent upsurge in insular slave raiding activities conducted by local rulers during the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, see Holm, "Slave Trade" for examples, pp. 335–337.

¹⁹ See note 13 above. In addition, Crawford has argued that a standardised currency in the form of silver 'ring money' might have already existed in parts of the Western Isles and Scotland during the final decades of the tenth century, see *Scandinavian Scotland* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1987), pp. 133–134. See also J. Graham-Campbell, "Viking-Age Silver Hoards of the Isle of Man" in C. Fell et al. (eds.), *The Viking Age in the Isle of Man* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1983), pp. 53–80, 63 and Barrow, *Kingship and Unity*, p. 20.

²⁰ Wyatt, "Gruffudd", pp. 595–617, Holm, "Slave Trade", pp. 336–341.

²¹ Barber has argued that the growth of trade and trading networks was a clear indication of the vibrant nature of the economies within Western Europe during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. M. Barber, *The Two Cities, Medieval Europe 1050–1320* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 60–85, 61. Nevertheless, modern sensibilities have prevented historians from recognising that the trade in human beings might have been part of this economic 'revolution'.

²² For example, Gillingham's characterization of the Hiberno-Norse towns of Ireland as "just a few coastal emporia" is unsubstantiated and misleading, see J. Gillingham, "Foundations of a Disunited Kingdom", A. Grant and K.J. Stringer (eds.), *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London/New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 48–64,

trade in the Irish Sea region during the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries would suggest that the institution was far from incompatible with the rise of the market economy.²³ If we wish to understand the reasons why the burgeoning and vibrant Irish Sea slave trade came to an end then we must therefore follow an alternative line of enquiry.

We have already seen that cultural, rather than economic, factors had instigated a shift in attitudes towards the institution of slavery in post-Conquest England. Conversely, there may also have been significant cultural motivations behind the apparent increase of slave raiding activities conducted by the warrior fraternities of the 'Celtic' regions. We must acknowledge these cultural motivations if we are to understand the dramatic antipathy that had arisen between the English elite and their 'Celtic' neighbours during the twelfth century. This chapter will, therefore, examine the increasingly condemnatory attitudes of English writers towards the 'Celtic' populations in this period, particularly in relation to slave raiding activities. It will analyse the various methods by which the post-Conquest English elite attempted to remould the behavioural norms of their 'Celtic' counterparts. The cultural tensions that this 'imperial' acculturation created within the 'Celtic' communities will also be highlighted. This, in turn, will be related to an examination of insular responses towards the increasing English cultural influence being exerted upon 'Celtic' society. I will suggest that the increase in slave raiding activities during the twelfth century constituted a significant expression of this cultural antipathy. Finally, we will examine how the English elite were attempting to modify the behavioural norms of their 'Celtic' counterparts. Indeed, it will be argued that English 'imperial' domination brought about the end of the medieval British slave supply network, although it did not destroy the institution of slavery in the region.

The Dynamics of Cultural Antipathy

We have already seen how, during the first half of the twelfth century, post-Conquest English writers had begun to cultivate a new and

50. Indeed, the archaeological evidence from these settlements attests both to their size and economically vibrant character; see Clark and Ambrosiani, *Towns*, pp. 104–106.

²³ A contention which is supported by McCormick's investigation of the slave trade in the Carolingian empire, see "New Light", pp. 17–54, see also chapter 1.

'superior' self-image for their countrymen.²⁴ This 'civilised' self-image was based predominantly upon revised martial codes/values and social norms of the reform movement. English writers, therefore, regarded their own society as one that had recently emerged from the barbarous milieu of the Anglo-Saxon past. This was a past that was thought to have been characterised by savagely violent behaviour, sexual laxity and residual paganism.²⁵ Yet, the 'enlightened' self-image of these twelfth century authors was not entirely forged in opposition to their Anglo-Saxon past. It was also sharply defined against the other communities of the British Isles that continued to adhere to more traditional modes of behaviour and systems of patriarchy.²⁶ During this period, then, the English elite increasingly came to regard their 'Celtic' neighbours with an attitude of condescending disdain. This is illustrated by the negative portrayals of the social and political mores of these 'Celtic' communities found within the contemporary English narratives.²⁷ The English sense of superiority was based upon the assumption that those communities that did not adhere to the revised behavioural norms which had been adopted within post-Conquest English society were to be regarded as barbarous and uncivilised. Significantly, the ideals and values of the reform movement provided the ideological tools necessary for the construction of this 'imperialistic' attitude. As Bartlett has observed,

Not sharing the social patterns of western Europe meant not being a part of the Church. The images of exclusion and otherness available to those who formed and expressed opinions in twelfth century western Europe included not only the dichotomy Christian/non-Christian, but

²⁴ See also Thomas, *English and Normans*, pp. 307–315.

²⁵ The tendency to compare contemporary 'barbarians' with the ancestors of a now 'civilised' society was also evident in Roman antiquity, see J.F. Killeen, "Ireland in the Greek and Roman writers", *PRIA*, 1976, 76c, pp. 207–215.

²⁶ See R. Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950–1350* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 23, J. Gillingham, "The English invasion of Ireland" in B. Bradshaw et al. (eds.), *Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 24–42 and Thomas, *English and Normans*, pp. 307–315.

²⁷ These negative twelfth-century portrayals may be juxtaposed against pre-Conquest Anglo-Saxon attitudes that appear to have regarded the 'Celtic' populations as cultural equals, *ibid.* and Gillingham "Conquering", pp. 68–69. See also D. Bethell, "English monks and Irish reform in the eleventh and twelfth centuries", *Historical Studies*, 8, 1971, pp. 117–126 and R. Marsden, "Race and Imperialism: Twelfth Century English Attitudes towards Scotland" in S. Kehoe & I. MacPhail (eds.) *A Panorama of Scottish History: Contemporary Considerations* (Glasgow: Glasgow University, School of History 2004), pp. 10–23.

also that of civilized/barbarian, and the two polarities were often mutually enforcing... As the men of Frankish Europe intruded upon societies around and unlike their own, they found both non-Christians... and local variants of Christianity (notably in the Celtic countries). Their response was to equate the two...²⁸

As we will see, the norms and objectives of the reform movement moulded and motivated the damning criticisms that the English commentators directed against their 'Celtic' counterparts. Furthermore, these criticisms were extremely similar to the condemnations that the reforming papacy had hurled against Anglo-Saxon society prior to the Norman Conquest.²⁹

Let us now, briefly, examine some examples of this superior English attitude in more detail. One of the most consistent condemnations directed by English writers against the 'Celtic' peoples was that they had failed to adhere to the reformers' codes concerning acceptable sexual behaviour. The primary motivation for this criticism was the 'Celtic' elite's continuing expression of power through displays of virility and female accumulation.³⁰ This 'Celtic' recalcitrance in the face of the ascetic ideal first became an issue of concern for English ecclesiastical leaders in the years following the Norman Conquest.³¹ In 1073–4 Archbishop Lanfranc wrote to Toirrdelbach Ua Briain, king of Munster and Guthric, king of Dublin complaining about the incestuous and debauched marital practices of their subjects.³² Lanfranc had been prompted into this action by a letter from Pope Gregory VII that had instructed the archbishop

...to extirpate serious moral offences wherever they occur, specifically and pre-eminently that you strive by every means open to you to ban the wicked practice we have heard rumoured of the Irish: namely that many of them not only desert their lawful wives but even sell them.³³

²⁸ Bartlett, *The Making of Europe*, p. 23.

²⁹ B. Smith, "The Frontiers of Church Reform in the British Isles, 1170–1230" in D. Abulafia and N. Berend (ed.), *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices* (Aldershot/Burlington USA: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 239–254, 244. See also chapter 4.

³⁰ See chapter 2.

³¹ It appears that Anglo-Saxon reformers, such as Archbishop Wulfstan of York, had been somewhat less critical of their 'Celtic' neighbours. Indeed, the pre-Conquest reformers would seem to have been far too busy attempting to modify the behaviour of their own countrymen, see Wormald "Wulfstan", pp. 191–224.

³² *LoL*, 8 and 10, pp. 67–73.

³³ "...quatinus grauiora usquequaque rescare uilia studeat, et inter omnia et prae omnibus nefas quod de Scottis audiuius, uidelicet quod plerique proprias uxores non solum deserunt sed etiam uendunt, modis omnibus prohibere contendat." Ibid., 8, pp. 66–67.

Similarly, John of Salisbury wrote to the Pope Adrian IV during the central years of the twelfth century complaining that the Welsh despised the law of matrimony and remarking that

...they (the Welsh) barter for a price their concubines, whom they have as well as wives; and ignoring the guilt of incest, they do not blush to uncover the nakedness of those who are kin by ties of blood.³⁴

This ecclesiastical reaction towards the 'Celtic' resistance to the reform norms was to manifest itself in a particularly derogatory attitude towards the 'Celtic' elite during the twelfth century. This 'superior other' attitude stereotyped the 'Celtic' populations as being lascivious, morally corrupt and, in the some extreme cases, less than human.³⁵ This is, perhaps, best exemplified by Gerald of Wales' views concerning the Irish. Gerald regarded the Irish in the following manner

This is a filthy people, wallowing in vice. Of all peoples it is the least instructed in the rudiments of Faith... a people that is adulterous, incestuous, unlawfully conceived and born, outside the law, and shamefully abusing nature herself in spiteful and horrible practices.³⁶

Gerald's criticisms of the Irish population frequently revolved around their sexual behaviour. He felt that the Irish were so given over to sexual excesses that many of them indulged in bestiality.³⁷ This portrayal, like

³⁴ "*Legem uero matrimonii contempnentes concubinas, quas cum uxoribus habent, commutant pretio, et crimen incestus ignorantes consanguinearum turpitudinem reuelare non erubescunt.*" *The Letters of John of Salisbury (1153–1161)*, W.J. Millor et al. (eds.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), vol. i, 87, p. 135. In this letter John was relaying the concerns of Meurig, Bishop of Bangor (1139–1161). Meurig's attitude, therefore, reveals that native Welsh ecclesiastics had adopted the values of reform and were attempting to impose these values upon the secular Welsh population with the support of the English and continental Church.

³⁵ Bartlett has revealed how similar arguments were employed by reform-minded ecclesiasts to denigrate the non-Christian peoples of Eastern Europe during the same period, see *Gerald*, pp. 158–177 and *Making of Europe*, pp. 18–23. The use of sexual mores as a means to differentiate and dehumanise has been used by individuals involved in many diverse imperial enterprises in many different eras and geographical locations, for examples see Killeen, "Ireland", p. 208.

³⁶ "*Gens enim haec gens spurcissima, gens vitiis involutissima, gens omnium gentium in fidei rudimentis incultissima...* Nec mirandum si de gente adultera, gente incesta, gente illegitime nata et copulata, gente exlege, arte inuida et inuisa ipsam turpiter adulterante naturam, tales interdum contra naturae legem natura producat." *TH/EH*, book iii, caps. xix and xxxv, pp. 164, 181, translation from O'Meara, *HTI*, pp. 108, 116. The *Topographia* was written during the final quarter of the twelfth century as a work of praise to Henry II. It attempts to provide a justification for his invasion of Ireland in 1171. Gerald also described Welsh sexual mores in a similar, if slightly more tempered manner, see *JDW*, book ii, cap. vi, pp. 262–263. Richard of Hexham also made similar complaints about the Scots, see below.

³⁷ For examples, see *HTI*, cap. 42, p. 64, cap. 54, pp. 73–74, cap. 56, p. 75, cap. 102, p. 110. Gerald was almost certainly drawing on classical accounts of the Irish

many of Gerald's wilder observations probably had little basis in reality, yet his attitude is extremely illuminating. It is indicative of the author's attempts to psychologically dehumanise the Irish populace by measuring them against the 'civilised' standards of the reform movement. As a result, Gerald's 'superior other' attitude was constructed predominantly around the Irish unwillingness to adhere to the revised sexual norms expounded by the ecclesiastical authorities. In Gerald's eyes the Irish populations' failure to adopt the reformers' norms meant that they were unable to access the revised avenues to social and spiritual power that the reform movement had opened up to his own elite. The English self-image of sexual temperance and piety might have been unfounded and hypocritical; nevertheless, it clearly provided the invaders with a means to assert their cultural hegemony over their Irish counterparts.³⁸

An incidental anecdote in Gerald's *Topographica Hibernica* provides us with evidence that such attitudes were also adopted and espoused by his secular counterparts. In chapter *XXI* of *distinctio II* of this text Gerald relates that a certain deformed Irishman had attended the court of the author's cousin, Maurice fitzGerald, in Wicklow. According to Gerald's account this unfortunate individual had features and limbs that resembled those of an ox. Gerald, who clearly felt some pity towards this disabled individual, relates how this man met a violent end at the hands of the local Irishmen. The reason that he gives for the untimely death of this individual is rather illuminating.

The Irish natives of the place, because the youths of the castle often taunted them with begetting such beings on cows, secretly killed him (the deformed man) in the end out of odium and malice—a fate which he did not deserve.³⁹

in this respect see D. Scully "At World's End: Scotland and Ireland in the Graeco-Roman Imagination" in E. Longley et al. (eds.) *Ireland (Ulster) Scotland: Concepts, Contexts, Comparisons* (Belfast: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, 2003), pp. 164–170, 167–168 and D. Scully, "The Portrayal of Ireland and the Irish in Bernard's Life of Malachy", D. Bracken and Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel (eds.), *Ireland and Europe in the Twelfth Century: Reform and Renewal* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2006), pp. 239–256, 242–243.

³⁸ "One of the ways in which the Anglo-Normans...justified their expansionism was by using religion as a validation for their actions, and a religious element formed an integral part of their picture of the barbarian", Bartlett, *Gerald*, p. 167, see also Davies, *English Empire*, pp. 127–128.

³⁹ "*Illis vero sepiissime Hiberniensibus terræ illius a juventute castri, quod tales in vaccis genuissent, ex suorum malitia et invidia quam non meruerat occulta nece demum interit.*" *TH/EH*, *distinctio ii*, cap. *xxi*, p. 108, translation modified from O'Meara, *HTI*, p. 74. O'Meara

This account suggests that the 'superior other' attitude that Gerald expressed in his texts (and which was based very much upon reform norms of sexual behaviour) had also rubbed off on his secular peers. Like Gerald, the English warriors at Maurice's castle appear to have psychologically degraded their Irish neighbours because of a perceived sense of sexual laxity and immorality. More significantly, the violent reaction of the Irish natives would suggest that they both recognised and despised this condescending attitude of cultural supremacy.⁴⁰

In addition to concerns regarding the lax sexual behaviour of their 'Celtic' neighbours the English commentators also regarded the 'Celtic' societies to be wild, lawless and lacking in centralised government.⁴¹ William of Newburgh felt that the politically fragmented nature of Irish society meant that it was continually plagued by war and slaughter.⁴² Similarly, Gerald of Wales commented that the Welsh

...live on plunder, theft and robbery, not only from foreigners and people hostile to them, but also from each other. When they see a chance of doing harm, they immediately forget all treaties of peace and ties of friendship.⁴³

Other twelfth-century English chroniclers, such as Ælred of Rievaulx and Richard of Hexham, felt that Scotland was infested with brigands

translates *invidia* as 'envy', however, it seems unlikely that this unfortunate character would have been the object of that emotion. Odium would, therefore, appear to be a more appropriate translation, see C.T. Lewis and C. Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879, repr. 1966), p. 995.

⁴⁰ "Divergences of sexual behaviour are clearly capable of provoking violent and irrational antipathy. In medieval Wales and Ireland this antipathy was allied with national hostility, resulting in a deep-seated prejudice on the part of the invaders. This prejudice, in its turn, was reinforced by the highest principles and blessed by the Church, thus creating an ideology able to sanctify the aggressiveness of the Anglo-Norman invaders, reinforce their hatreds, and allay their self doubts. The metamorphosis of Church reform into an 'ideology of colonization' was complete." Bartlett, *Gerald*, p. 45. I concur with Bartlett on this point but would substitute his 'national hostility' with 'ethnic hostility'.

⁴¹ A criticism also aimed by reform-minded clerics at the Slavs in this period, see Bartlett, *Gerald*, pp. 165–167.

⁴² *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, *CRSHR*, vol. i, p. 167. William's contemporary, Gerald of Wales held very similar views, see *HTI*, cap. 99, pp. 106–107, cap. 100, pp. 107–108, cap. 101, pp. 108–109, cap. 102, pp. 109–110.

⁴³ "*Ad hæc etiam rapimis insistere, raptoque vivere, furto, et latrocinio, non solum ad externos et hostiles populos, uerum etiam inter se proprium habent. Pacis quoque et amicitie fœdera, visa nocendi opportunitate non respiciunt: fidei sacramentique religionem turpi postponentes lucro.*" *Descriptio Kambriæ*, lib. ii, cap. ii, p. 207, translation from Thorpe, *JDW*, p. 257.

over whom the Scottish monarch exercised very little control.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the majority of these English writers commented with some dismay that the ‘Celtic’ populations continued to participate in activities that were regarded to be unchivalrous and uncivilised. Gerald of Wales noted that Welsh society was particularly prone to dynastic feuds and vengeance killings.

The most frightful disturbances occur in their (the Welsh) territories... people being murdered, brothers killing each other and even putting each other’s eyes out, for as everyone knows from experience it is very difficult to settle disputes of this sort.⁴⁵

Such attitudes were clearly formed in direct relation to the reformers’ objectives regarding the imposition of monogamous practices and social stability. Internecine strife was stimulated by the continuing practice of resource polygyny within the ‘Celtic’ communities which, in turn, acted against the Church’s centralising impulses.⁴⁶ Political fragmentation continued to facilitate the ravages of the ‘Celtic’ warrior fraternities and acted directly against the imposition of the Truce of God within these regions. This perceived lack of order appears to have provided the English elite with a ‘civilising’ ethos that motivated them to impose order and orthodoxy upon their unruly neighbours.⁴⁷ For example, the author of the *Gesta Stephani* felt that the English conquerors and settlers in Wales

...had perseveringly civilized it (Wales) after they had vigorously subdued its inhabitants; to encourage peace they imposed law and statutes on them (the Welsh); and they made the country so abound in peace and productivity that it might easily have been thought a second (Roman?) Britain.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ See chapter 2.

⁴⁵ “*Per quod graves terris eorum toties, nec sine cædibus multis et fratricidiis, seu fratrum exoculationibus crebris, virium quoque omnium et successum experientia difficile sedabiles, emergere solent turbationes.*” *DK*, lib. ii, cap. iv, pp. 211–212, translation from Thorpe, *JDW*. See Davies, *English Empire*, pp. 132–133 and for other examples see Gillingham, “Conquering”, pp. 79–81.

⁴⁶ Which is why the reforming hierarchy was attempting to alter such practices.

⁴⁷ “It was politically useful for the Anglo-Normans...to be able to adopt a high moral tone towards these peoples they were attacking. It improved morale, provided a justification for aggression, and reinforced feelings of superiority held by the invaders. Some kind of religious deficiency was attributed to the barbarians and became an integral part of the ethnographic characterization.”, Bartlett, *Gerald*, p. 170.

⁴⁸ “...*propriis incolis uiriliter edomitis, constanter exoluere; ad pacem confouendam, legem et plebiscita eis indixere; adeoque terram fertilem omnibus copiis affluentem reddidere, ut secundissime*

In particular, English concerns regarding the ‘lawlessness’ and ‘barbarism’ of their ‘Celtic’ neighbours were characterised by antipathy towards slave raiding and trading activities. During the central years of the twelfth century John of Salisbury complained that the Welsh were

...rude and untamed; they live like beasts and despise the word of life, and though they nominally profess Christ, they deny Him in their life and ways. For they carry on a regular slave trade and sell Christians into foreign parts...⁴⁹

Furthermore, John of Salisbury goes on to directly associate such slaving activities with the continuing existence of concubinage and incestuous unions within Welsh society.⁵⁰ In doing this he illustrates that a clear psychological connection associating slavery with sexual laxity and moral corruption existed within the contemporary ecclesiastical mindset. Richard of Hexham made a similar connection when describing a Scottish slave raid upon the north of England in 1138. Richard felt that this raid had resulted in Scots carrying away “noble widowed matrons” (“*solas nobiles matronas*”) and “chaste maidens” (“*castas virgins*”).⁵¹ He depicted their Scottish captors as being devoid of sexual restraint, moral character and, therefore, humanity. He described their actions in the following, somewhat colourful, manner.

... these bestial men (*bestiales homines*), who regard as nothing adultery and incest and the other crimes, after they were weary of abusing these most hapless creatures (the widows and maidens) after the manner of brute

Britannie nequaquam inferiorem aestimares.” GS, pp. 14–15. Gillingham translates ‘*Britannie*’ as ‘England’ here, see Gillingham, “Foundations”, p. 61.

⁴⁹ “...rudis et indomita bestiali more uiuens aspernatur uerbum uitae, et Christum nomine tenus profitentes uita et moribus diffitenturi. Ab his enim Christiani usitato commercio in partes transmarinas uenundati ab infidelibus concaptiuantur.” LJS, 87, p. 135. Once again this account was a recitation of complaints made by Meurig, bishop of Bangor, see above.

⁵⁰ Ibid., John’s complaints do not refer to incest as we would understand it but rather to marriage within degrees of kinship prohibited by the strict rules of the reform movement i.e. between cousins or the ex-wives of brothers; practices which were relatively common and indeed politically expedient in the kin-based societies of Ireland and Wales. Nevertheless, as Millersdaughter has highlighted accusations of incest carried great power as they “constitute a substantial portion of the “ideology of colonization” with which medieval and early modern England justified its various conquests”, Millersdaughter, “Geopolitics of Incest”, p. 276.

⁵¹ DGRS, CRSHR, vol. iii, p. 157. Richard of Hexham was the reform-minded chronicler and prior at the Augustinian priory of Hexham, Northumberland. His account of Stephen’s reign was written shortly before the prior’s death in the 1140’s.

beasts, either made them their slaves or sold them to other barbarians for cows.⁵²

Both Richard of Hexham and John of Salisbury clearly felt that their 'Celtic' neighbours' failure to adhere to the reformers' norms meant that they could no longer be regarded, in any real sense, to be Christian peoples. This attitude, which is evident in many of the ecclesiastical narratives of the period, is synonymous with the uniform classification of the 'Celtic' peoples as 'barbarians'. Although such attitudes were most prevalent amongst English ecclesiastics, they are also evident in other parts of Christendom too. The continental bishop and saint, Bernard of Clairvaux, commented that when his friend, colleague and fellow reformer, Malachy, became Bishop of Connor in Ireland in 1137,

...the man of God understood that he had been sent not to men but to beasts. Never before had he known the like, in whatever depth of barbarism; never had he found men so shameless in regard to morals, so dead in regard of rites, so impious in regard of faith, so barbarous in regard of laws, so stubborn in regard of discipline, so unclean in regard of life. They were Christians in name, in fact pagans.⁵³

John Gillingham has argued that the twelfth-century accounts that classify the 'Celtic' populations as barbarians are indicative of a significant ideological shift in the attitudes of the English elite. He feels that this shift signals the birth of a definitive 'English' identity that was based primarily upon a sense of economic and social superiority. Gillingham argues that this superior attitude first became evident within the writings of William of Malmesbury.⁵⁴ He, therefore, feels that William was

⁵² "*Denique illi bestiales homines, adulterium et incestum ac cetera scelera pro nichilo ducentes, postquam more brutorum animalium illis miserrimis abuti pertæsi sunt, eas vel sibi ancillas fecerunt, vel pro vaccis aliis barbaris vendiderunt.*" Ibid., translation from Anderson, *SAEC*, p. 187.

⁵³ "*Cum autem cepisset pro officio suo agere, tunc intellexit homo Dei, non ad homines se, sed ad bestias destinatum. Nusquam adhuc tales expertus fuerat in quantacunque barbarie: nusquam repererat sic protervos ad mores, sic ferales ad ritus, sic ad fidem impios, ad leges barbaros, cervicosos ad disciplinam, spurcos ad vitam. Christiani nomine, re pagani.*" *De Vita et Rebus Gestis S. Malachie*, PL, J.P. Migne (ed.) (Paris: Migne, 1854), 182, p. 1084, translation from Lawlor, *Life of St. Malachy*, p. 37. St. Bernard wrote this *Vita* in around 1149 following Malachy's death, see also chapter 2. The tone of the tract suggests that Malachy was a foreigner to Ireland yet, in truth he had been born and raised there. Nevertheless Malachy's reform sensibilities clearly set him apart from his 'barbarous' countrymen in the mind of Bernard of Clairvaux. For other examples of similar attitudes see Gillingham, "Conquering", pp. 67–84.

⁵⁴ A contention supported by Thomas, *English and Normans*, p. 311.

...an early exponent of the splendid English habit of regarding the course of English history as the triumph of civilisation over barbarism. William's crucial intellectual step was to take the religious component out of the concept of barbarian and redefine it in terms of secular material culture...In the earlier period the word *barbarus* had been synonymous with *paganus*, but in William's eyes the Christian Celts of his own day were 'barbarians.'⁵⁵

I would argue that Gillingham's hypothesis is flawed in two crucial respects. Firstly, William's negative attitude towards the 'Celts' was hardly the novel invention of that author and, secondly, the notion that William of Malmesbury defined his sense of English 'otherness' purely "in terms of secular material culture" fails to acknowledge either his motivations or context.⁵⁶ Indeed, this appears to be an extraordinary statement with regard to a monastic author writing from within an ascetic milieu during an era of Church reform. William's monastic background makes it extremely difficult for us to extricate his opinions on the secular world from his religious sensibilities. His opinions may well signal the emergence of a distinctly hybrid English identity in the post-Conquest era. They may also be suggestive of a fundamental shift in the attitudes of the English elite towards their 'Celtic' neighbours. They may, in addition, signal an increasing awareness of England's economic hegemony within the British Isles (albeit drawing on similar notions evident in classical texts).⁵⁷ Yet, despite all of this, there is nothing which is definitively 'English' about William's attitudes in this respect, apart from the fact that he was an English exponent of the reform ideal. As such William was drawing on well established arguments and allusions evident in both the classical texts and the contemporary reform discourse of continental Christendom. We have seen how the continental bishop Bernard of Clairvaux, writing at around the same time, expounded attitudes towards the 'Celtic' peoples which were extremely similar to William's. Moreover, Bernard was undoubtedly drawing on a well established tradition of anti-'Celtic' sentiment amongst reform-minded ecclesiastics in northern France.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Gillingham, "Conquering", p. 69 and "Foundations", p. 59. See also *English*, pp. 43, 104.

⁵⁶ Gillingham, "Foundations", p. 59.

⁵⁷ See, Killeen, "Ireland" and Scully, "World's End".

⁵⁸ See McDonough, *Moriut*, pp. 48–51 for examples. Hugh Thomas has also noted that such sentiments were particularly virulent in pre-1066 Normandy, see *English and Normans*, p. 310.

An early example of this tradition can be found in Warner of Rouen's satirical poem *Moriuht* composed during the first quarter of the eleventh century.⁵⁹ Warner was a scholar steeped in classical literature and as such would have almost certainly been aware of the highly pejorative Graeco-Roman representations of Ireland and its inhabitants evident in the works of ancient writers.⁶⁰ Warner and his continental contemporaries were most probably also aware that these ancient scholars' classification of the Irish as 'barbarians' had been dramatically modified and revised by early medieval ecclesiastics such as Bede. Bede had emphasised the rehabilitation and spiritual vitality of the Irish following their acceptance of Christianity in the fifth century.⁶¹ Yet, rather than following Bede's more positive assessment of this fellow Christian people, a significant number of Norman and Frankish ecclesiastics, including Warner, chose instead to reinvigorate those classical sentiments which regarded the Irish as lustful, brutal barbarians beyond the pale of civilisation.⁶² It was no coincidence that Warner was writing at the same time and in the same geographical location which witnessed the dramatic expansion of the Peace of God movement and the infectious spread of reforming zeal.⁶³ Indeed, Warner's invective against the lascivious *Moriuht* clearly identifies him as a proponent of the ascetic ideal of reform.⁶⁴ Furthermore, his text is littered with pejorative comments about the Irish 'Celts', denigrating their appearance and dress and associating them with laziness, backwardness, treachery, paganism, beast-like qualities, sinfulness, sexual immorality and slavery: both spiritual and actual.⁶⁵ In the opening section of his poem Warner provides the following ethnographic description of the inhabitants of Ireland and their shortcomings:

Where the sun sets lies an isle, called Ireland, a fertile (land) though not well tended by its inhabitants. Many people say that if this (island) was occupied by a nation of any skill, it would surpass Italy in its riches. Regrettably, though this (land) affords a view of life in paradise from all sides, it rears and fosters Irishmen who lack refinement. . . . Though these

⁵⁹ For a fuller discussion of this text see Chapter 3.

⁶⁰ McDonough, *Moriuht*, pp. 12–13, 20, 37–40, 45–51.

⁶¹ A perspective also taken by the ninth-century author Walahfrid Strabo, see Scully, "Malachy", pp. 242–245.

⁶² For examples see McDonough, *Moriuht*, pp. 48–51.

⁶³ Moore, *Revolution*, p. 8.

⁶⁴ McDonough, *Moriuht*, pp. 32, 35–37.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 74–77, 83, 85, 87.

things be granted to them, in addition, under the frame of their body, their mind is crushed. They are also unaware of the light of God enthroned on high. How much they run after prostitutes with their bodies, aided by their mode of dress! Word has been brought to me: they couple like animals; they do not wear trousers, because they are constantly locked in sexual activity. For these people honour Venus because of her sexual passion for Mars. Phew! They defile beds, like a one-year old child... And up to the present time many facts have been reported to me about these Irish. It is immoral to record them and it shames (me) to recount (them).⁶⁶

Warner of Rouen therefore issued forth a set of condemnations calumniating 'Celtic' social norms and moral fibre some hundred years before William of Malmesbury and subsequent twelfth-century writers like Gerald of Wales penned an almost identical set of negative assessments regarding the 'barbarian' nature of their neighbours. Although Warner was the product of a different society and cultural milieu he had one very clear thing in common with these twelfth-century English clerics; the ascetic norms and objectives of the reform movement. It should be no surprise, then, that when we examine the vociferous twelfth-century English condemnations of the 'Celtic' populations we discover that the majority of them also emanated from ecclesiastical authors with reforming pretensions.⁶⁷ Their foremost criticisms regarding the 'Celtic' populations were founded upon the underlying objectives of the reform movement that sought to eradicate traditional expressions of virility, curtail warrior violence and create a more stable and peaceful Christian society. It was the reform movement, therefore, that provided the ideological template for the English cultural and political domination over the 'Celtic' regions. Pope Adrian IV's *Laudabiliter*, the papal privilege allegedly granted to Henry II in 1159 makes this clear.

...we regard it as pleasing and acceptable to us that you (i.e. Henry II) should enter that island (i.e. Ireland) for the purpose of enlarging the boundaries of the church, checking the descent into wickedness, correcting

⁶⁶ "Solis in occasum iacet insula Scottia dicta, Fertilis, a populo non bene culta suo; Vt dicunt plures, hanc gens si gnara teneret, Vinceret Italiam fertilitate sua, Haec paradisiacam prospectans undique uitam, Heu! nutrit Scottos et fouet ineptidos... His sibi concessis, pressa quoque mente sub artu Carnis, et ignari luminis [et] Altithroni. Quantum per habitum sectantur corpore scortum! Est mihi perlatum: more cubant pecudum; Non braccas portant, ueneri quia semper adherent; Illis namque Venus Martis amore decus. P<hi>lectos uiolant, anni uelut unius infans... Sont et adhuc de his Scottis mihi multa relata, Scribere quod nefas est quodque referre pudet." Ibid., pp. 74–75.

⁶⁷ See examples below.

the morals and implanting virtues, and encouraging the growth of the faith of Christ...⁶⁸

Adrian therefore sanctioned any prospective English conquest of Ireland in the name of reform just as Pope Alexander II had sanctioned William's conquest of England in 1066. The terminology employed by Adrian IV is strikingly similar to that used by Alexander II in his letter to William the Conqueror of October 1071.⁶⁹

Attempts to disseminate the 'civilised' values of chivalry and the reform movement into the psyche of the 'Celtic' populations were not confined to ventures of militaristic and political domination. The 'Celtic' elite might be courted into the chivalric orbit of their English counterparts with the use of lavish gifts, flattery and prestigious marriage alliances.⁷⁰ It appears that Henry I attempted to draw 'Celtic' nobles into his circle in the same way that his father had attempted to incorporate Anglo-Saxon leaders like Eadric the Wild and Waltheof of Northumbria into the post-Conquest elite. In order to illustrate this point in more detail let us briefly examine the career of the twelfth-century Scottish king David I (1124–1153). David, the youngest son of the prolific slave raider Malcolm Canmore, was brought up in England

⁶⁸ "...gratum et acceptum habemus ut pro dilatandis ecclesie terminis, pro viciis restringendo decursu, pro corrigendis moribus et virtutibus inserendis, pro Christiane religionis augmento..." *EH*, lib. ii, cap. v, pp. 146–147. This was further reinforced by a privilege granted by Pope Alexander III, see *ibid.*, p. 147. Both documents suggest that the Irish population were Christians in name only. There has been some historical debate concerning whether *Laudabiliter* was a contemporary forgery made in support of the interests of the English crown. However, it is now generally accepted that Adrian IV did issue a document sanctioning Henry's expedition to Ireland. The redactor of the said document, Gerald of Wales, certainly believed in its authenticity.

⁶⁹ This stated "We learn at this time of your outstanding reputation for piety among the rulers and princes of the world and we receive unmistakable evidence of your support for the Church: you do battle against the forces of simoniacal heresy and you defend the freedom of catholic rites and customs. But since the crown of reward is promised not to those who begin well but those who are proven at the end, we urge your excellency zealously to persevere in your most Christian devotion." See also chapter 4. Brendan Smith has observed: "The papal banner carried to England by William, duke of Normandy, in 1066 symbolised an alliance between Church reformers and sympathetic princes which was to persist in the British Isles throughout the twelfth century and beyond. In 1171 the second conquest of a Christian kingdom by a neighbouring Christian power in the region occurred with papal support in Ireland, reinforcing the message that within Christendom secular borders did not take precedence over the need to reform the Church." Smith, "Frontiers", p. 244.

⁷⁰ For examples see Davies, *Domination*, pp. 6, 48–58. Davies argues that by doing this "...the kings and nobles of England were demonstrating their social superiority and the magnetism of their courts and their *mores*."

at the royal court of Henry I. Moreover, Henry appears to have spent a great deal of time and energy cultivating David in the revised manners and mores of the English elite.⁷¹ The English king is said to have lavished both gifts and attention on the Scottish prince.⁷² David also received a chivalric military training and subsequently served as a knight in Henry's service in Normandy.⁷³ In 1124 Henry bestowed upon David a wealthy English bride named Matilda. This was a prestigious union that was clearly intended to incorporate David into the English royal circle as Matilda was the daughter of Judith, the Conqueror's niece.⁷⁴ Henry's strategy of acculturation should, by now, be extremely familiar indeed the twelfth-century English accounts that describe David's character suggest that it was relatively successful. William of Malmesbury remarked that David was

...a young man of more courtly disposition than the rest, since he had from boyhood been polished by familiar intercourse with the us (i.e. the English), and rubbed off the barbarian gaucherie of Scottish manners.⁷⁵

The central justification that William of Malmesbury gave for his portrayal of David as a 'civilised' and enlightened individual was that the Scottish king had adhered to the behavioural norms of the reform movement. William noted that David and his brothers, Edgar and Alexander, had all been royal role models because

...they successfully overcame the vice most prevalent in kings, and it is recorded that no woman entered their bedchamber except their lawful

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 50–51.

⁷² See *OV*, vol. iv, pp. 274–275.

⁷³ Henry subsequently gave David an estate at Querqueville near Cherbourg, see Davies, *Domination*, p. 50 and G.W.S. Barrow, *David I of Scotland (1124–1153) The Balance of New and Old* (Reading: University of Reading, 1985), pp. 16–17.

⁷⁴ Henry's choice of bride in this instance is interesting as Matilda was the daughter of Judith, the Conqueror's niece and Waltheof the Anglo-Saxon earl who had failed to modify his uncivilised habits and subsequently been punished for treason. The union may have, therefore, been deliberately intended to remind David that his position at the English court depended upon his continuing adherence to chivalric mores. This appears to have been reinforced when King Stephen confirmed David's possession of Waltheof's old earldom in 1136, see *DGRS, CRSHR*, vol. iii, p. 146.

⁷⁵ "...iuuenis ceteris curialor et qui, nostrorum conuictu et familiaritate limatus a puero, omnem rubiginem Scotticæ barbariæ deteraserat." *GRA*, pp. 726–727. William of Malmesbury also remarked that David had offered his subjects financial incentives in return for their adoption of more 'civilised' mores, *ibid.*

wives, nor did any of them bring a stain upon his innocence by keeping any mistress.⁷⁶

A few years later William of Newburgh also commented upon David's commendable sexual continence labelling him "a civilised king of an uncivilised race."⁷⁷

It, therefore, appears that the English elite deliberately attempted to 'educate' the rulers of the more traditional communities of Britain in the prestigious mores of the reform movement. This was probably done in the hope that leaders, such as David I, would conduct their affairs in a more tempered manner than had their fathers. Clearly the prohibition of resource polygyny and the imposition of the reform rules concerning monogamy were of central significance to this strategy. Both William of Malmesbury and William of Newburgh appear to have felt that if those individuals at the pinnacle of Scottish society could be made to adopt such norms then they might be more easily disseminated into the middling and lower orders.⁷⁸ Yet, as we shall see this strategy of English acculturation at the highest level was only partially successful. Indeed, as the secular and ecclesiastical elite within 'Celtic' communities were drawn into the cultural orbit of reformed Christendom violent and disruptive tensions were ignited within their communities. Whilst this acculturation was being undertaken the conflicts between traditional patriarchal values and the revised behavioural codes of the reform movement were played out, once again, in a dramatic fashion. In order to illustrate this let us now turn our gaze to events in Wales during the early decades of the twelfth century.

Acculturation, Antipathy and the Welsh Warrior

Due to geographical proximity and longstanding political and social associations the invasive tendrils of English cultural influence were,

⁷⁶ "... ita domesticum regibus uitium euicerunt ut numquam feratur in eorum thalamos nisi legitimas uxores isse, nec eorum quemquam pelicatu aliquo pudicitiam contristasse." Ibid.

⁷⁷ "... rex non barbarus barbarae gentis..." *The History of English Affairs, Book I*, P.G. Walsh and M.J. Kennedy (eds. and trans.) (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1988), pp. 102–103. Moreover, David's reform-minded nature was evident even before he acceded to the throne. For example, in 1113 he was responsible for resettling a community of Frankish monks at Kelso on the Tweed, see Barrow, *Kingship and Unit*, p. 81.

⁷⁸ This process of 'acculturation' was further facilitated by David's settlement of English noblemen upon the lands of Southern Scotland, G.W.S. Barrow, *The Anglo-Norman Era in Scottish History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), pp. 61–118.

perhaps, felt most immediately and most keenly within the communities of medieval Wales.⁷⁹ In the decade following the Conquest individual Norman lords began to make territorial inroads along the river valleys of the Marches, into the lowland areas of South Wales, and even into the mountains of Gwynedd. These invaders established themselves in powerful lordships and colonised them with settlers from England and France. The intrusion of these settlers appears to have placed phenomenal strains upon the structures of native Welsh society. These strains initially came to a head between 1094 and 1098, when there were several Welsh uprisings against their new territorial overlords.⁸⁰ Furthermore, traditional slave raiding activities appear to have characterised these uprisings. For example, in around 1093, the Norman knight, Robert of Rhuddlan was slain whilst attempting to repel a Welsh slaving raid upon his newly established castle at Rhuddlan.⁸¹ In addition, the author of the *Historia Gruffud vab Kenan* remarked that after an assault on a Norman garrison on Anglesey the Welsh “travelled back with the booty, with French and English in fetters”.⁸² The author of the *Brut y Tywysogyon* noted that in 1094 the Welsh

...destroyed all the castles of Ceredigion and Dyfed, except two, that is, Pembroke and Rhyd-y-gors. And they took with them the people and all the cattle of Dyfed, and they left Dyfed and Ceredigion waste.⁸³

The increase in Welsh slave raiding activities during this period appears to have been symptomatic of the growing cultural antipathy between traditional elements of Welsh warrior class and the external cultural influences exerted by the new ‘chivalric’ elite. The dynamics of this cultural antipathy are perhaps best illustrated by the career of two men in particular; Cadwgan ap Bleddyn, the Welsh ruler of

⁷⁹ The Anglo-Saxon elite had undoubtedly exerted political and economic influences over the Welsh territories for centuries. Nevertheless, the territorial incursions into Wales following the Norman Conquest significantly intensified such influences.

⁸⁰ R.R. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change, Wales 1063–1415* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 35.

⁸¹ *OV*, vol. iv, p. 141.

⁸² “Ac val kynt y kerdassant wynteu dracheuyn a’r anreith, ac a Freinc a Saesson en rwyym ganthunt ac en garcharoryon.” *HGK*, pp. 42, 73.

⁸³ “...gestyll Keredigyawen a Dyuet eithyr deu, nyt [amgen] Penuro a Ryt y Gors; a’r bobyl a’r holl any[ueileit] Dyuet a dugant gantunt ac adaw a oru[gant] Dyuet a Cheredigyawen ynn diffeith.” *ByT*, pp. 34–35, see also *Annales Cambriæ* J. Williams ab Ithel (ed.) (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860), pp. 34–35. The events of 1094 are further supported by the later and slightly less reliable *Brenhinedd y Saesson*, pp. 86–87.

Powys, and his son, Owain ap Cadwgan. The native chronicler of the *Brut y Teywysogyon* had a great deal to say about these two individuals and clearly felt that their volatile relationship with Henry I had been extremely significant.

Cadwgan ap Bleddyn (d. 1111) was one of the many sons of Bleddyn ap Cynfan, ruler of Powys, who was murdered by his rival Rhys ab Owain in 1075.⁸⁴ Early in his career Cadwgan appears to have behaved in manner befitting a traditional Welsh prince attempting to assert his place within a patriarchal hierarchy. Following the death of Rhys ap Tewdwr, king of Deheubarth, in 1093 we find Cadwgan staking a claim to a portion of Rhys' territory by opportunistically ravaging there.⁸⁵ Cadwgan appears to have been aggrieved when the external forces of the Norman lord William fitz Baldwin subsequently stepped into the political vacuum and assumed control of Deheubarth. As a result Cadwgan appears to have staunchly resisted the new intruders and he was heavily involved in the insurgency of the 1090s. In 1096 his warband was said to have attacked the castle of Pembroke and "...plundered it of all its cattle and ravaged the whole land; and they returned home with vast spoil."⁸⁶

In 1098 Cadwgan fled to Ireland to escape a massive incursion into North Wales by forces under the command of Hugh of Avranches, earl of Shrewsbury.⁸⁷ Yet, the chronicler of the *Brut* relates that in the following year Cadwgan returned to Wales and made peace with the invaders after which he received a portion of his patrimony in Powys.⁸⁸ Following this submission Cadwgan's behaviour appears to have become remarkably modified. It is true that he became involved in a rebellious plot against Henry I in 1102 yet, his co-conspirators in this instance were not Welsh warriors but the Norman nobles Robert, earl of Shrewsbury, and his brother Arnulf of Montgomery, earl of Pembroke.⁸⁹ Cadwgan appears to have been forgiven by King Henry for this misdemeanour

⁸⁴ *ByT*, pp. 28–99.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 32–33. Cadwgan's actions appear to have been motivated by a traditional feud between the dynasties of Powys and Deheubarth for Rhys ap Tewdwr had killed two of Cadwgan's brothers in 1088, see also Davies, *Coexistence*, p. 73.

⁸⁶ "...a'e yspeilaw o'e holl anyueileit a diffeithaw yr holl wlat; a chyt a diruawer anreith yd ymhoelassant adref." *ByT*, pp. 36–37.

⁸⁷ Cadwgan escaped to Ireland along with another Welsh prince, Gruffudd ap Cynan of Gwynedd, *ibid.*, pp. 37–39.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 38–39.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 41–42.

and he was subsequently allowed to receive control over Ceredigion and further lands in Powys.⁹⁰ Indeed, Cadwgan prospered from his co-operative attitude towards the English monarch and in 1109 he is said to have prepared a great feast for all of the rulers of Wales. This may well have been a deliberate attempt to emulate the munificence of his 'chivalric' eastern neighbour.⁹¹ Yet, Cadwgan's increasing connection and affiliation with the English and continental elite appears to have created tensions within his own household. This is evident from the actions of Cadwgan's son, Owain, who reacted violently to the intrusion of external cultural influences into his father's court. Owain expressed his displeasure in a manner analogous to that adopted by the mythical Welsh warrior Efnisien in the Welsh tale *Branwen Uerch Llyr*.⁹²

The chronicler of the *Brut y Tywysogyon* relates that during Cadwgan's great feast of 1109 Owain heard much talk of a beautiful Welsh noblewoman named Nest. Nest was the wife of the Norman castellan Gerald of Windsor and, even more significantly, she had also been a mistress of the English king, Henry I.⁹³ During the night that followed the feast Owain besieged Gerald's castle with a small war band and raped Nest and abducted her along with Gerald's children and much of his treasure.⁹⁴ Yet, this was no random act of youthful drunkenness and delinquency. It was a symbolic statement against the cultural intrusion of external mores into the circle of the Welsh elite and an expression of the traditional warrior values of power and virility. Through this action Owain was directly defying his father's will. He was also protesting against Cadwgan's apparent rejection of traditional cultural

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 47.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 55. In addition, Cadwgan later married a continental bride (the daughter of the Norman noble, Picot of Sai) named his son by her 'Henry', and built a Norman style castle at Trallwng Llywelyn near Welshpool, *ibid.*, p. 63 and Davies, *Coexistence*, p. 67.

⁹² Like Owain, Efnisien resisted external cultural influences using violent and anti-social behaviour. In addition, he opposed the mixing of Welsh blood by murdering his own nephew who was the product of a union between his sister, Branwen, and the Irish king Matholwch. See chapter 2. The similarities in behaviour may be no coincidence, indeed, Katherine Millersdaughter has argued that the written reproduction of the *Four Branches*, during the late 11th century early twelfth century should be regarded as an "anti-colonialist discourse" within in the geopolitical context of the Anglo-Norman expansion into Wales, see "Geopolitics of Incest", p. 285.

⁹³ Gerald of Wales notes that Henry fitz Henry was the illegitimate son of an adulterous union between Henry I and Nest, see *JDW*, lib. ii, cap. vii, p. 189. This contention is also supported by the *Annales Cambriae*, p. 47. See also J.E. Lloyd, *A History of Wales* (London: Longmans, Green, 1912), vol. ii, p. 499.

⁹⁴ *ByT*, pp. 56–57.

values. In addition, Owain was emphasising his power by dishonouring and symbolically emasculating both Henry I and his vassal, Gerald of Windsor, who had dared to occupy Welsh territory. As was often the case in traditional patriarchal societies Owain's overtly political action was characterised by sexual violence and female abduction. Owain's rapacious behaviour was rendered all the more symbolic, both culturally and politically, because his chosen victim was a Welsh noblewoman who had been sleeping with the enemy. His actions appear to have had the desired effect as the *Brut* relates that upon hearing of this outrage his father

...was indignantly grieved thereat because of the rape that had been committed upon Nest...and also for fear lest king Henry should be enraged at the injury to his steward.⁹⁵

Cadwgan subsequently ordered his son to return the castellan's wife and property but to no avail. Following Owain's refusal of compliance, Richard Bishop of London, King Henry's steward at Shrewsbury, placed a price on Owain's head and arranged for the war bands of Ithel and Madog ap Rhiddid, sworn enemies of Owain's kindred, to hunt down and capture the Welsh renegade.⁹⁶ Owain appears to have learned of this plot and subsequently fled to Ireland as a fugitive. Moreover, Cadwgan appears to have felt that his paternal inaction had implicated him in Owain's crime and he soon accompanied his son into exile.⁹⁷ In spite of these initial fears the influence of Henry I's charmed circle appears to have had a profound impact upon Cadwgan and he returned shortly afterwards and submitted to the king. For his part Henry appears to have followed the reconciliatory policy of his father. He received Cadwgan with favour and attempted to draw him even further into his orbit by rewarding the Welsh Prince with the return of his territory and a noble French bride.⁹⁸ Yet, the *Brut y Tywysogyon*

⁹⁵ "...kymryt ynn drwec arnaw gann sorr a oruc ef hynny o achawes y treis gyt a wnathoedit a Nest uerch Rys, a heuyt rac ouyn lldyaw Henri urenhin am sarhaet y ystiwart." *ByT*, pp. 56–57.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 57–59. It is interesting that Bishop Richard should have become involved in such a quarrel. Moreover, it seems that he employed William the Conqueror's tactics of using native forces to deal with traditionally minded enemies. Significantly, Richard secured the support of Ithel and Madog by promising that they would be accepted into Henry's charmed circle, see *ByT*, pp. 56–57.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 58–59. Indeed, Cadwgan may have been expecting Henry I to react with traditional ferocity towards this act of sexual violence against one of his concubines.

⁹⁸ See also notes 74 and 91, above.

relates that Cadwgan achieved this favourable settlement upon one very strict condition:

...that there was to be no association or friendship between him and Owain, his son, and he was not to allow him to come into the land, and that he was not to give him either counsel or advice, either support or help.⁹⁹

In this short extract the *Brut's* chronicler lays bare the dynamics and stark reality of Henry's strategy of acculturation which could undermine and even sever the closest ties of Welsh kinship. As for Owain he continued to act in a manner befitting the leader of a traditional warrior fraternity. He returned from Ireland shortly after Cadwgan and allied himself with the war band of Madog ap Rhiddid. This alliance is particularly significant because, as already noted, Madog was a long standing enemy of Owain's kindred. The *Brut* notes that shortly after Owain's exile, Madog had ravaged and taken possession of Owain's portion of Powys.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, Richard bishop of London had previously employed Madog and his brother to hunt Owain down and neutralise him earlier that same year. So how had these two sworn enemies been drawn together?

The *Brut* notes that, following Owain's escape to Ireland, Madog had subsequently quarrelled with Richard bishop of London because he was harbouring and protecting a dissident contingent of traditional 'Saxon' warriors who were ravaging Marcher territories and then escaping back to Madog's lands.¹⁰¹ Richard therefore ordered Madog to hand over these 'Old English' (*Saesson*) warriors however he refused to do so. It was at this point that Madog ap Rhiddid made an alliance with his bitter rival, Owain ap Cadwgan, indeed the author of the *Brut* was compelled to comment how

⁹⁹ "A rodi a oruc y brenhin y [*kyuoeth*] Cadwgan trwy yr amot hwnn yma hyt na bei gytymeithas na chyfuellach rygtaw ac Owain, y val, ac na adei idaw dyuot y'r wlat, ac na rodei idaw na chgor na chussul na nerth na channhorthwy." *ByT*, pp. 62–63.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 58–61.

¹⁰¹ "Saesson" *Ibid.*, pp. 62–63. Hugh Thomas has argued that the presence of these English warriors provides evidence of the significant ethnic hostility that continued to exist between traditionally minded Anglo-Saxon elements and the French speaking elite in England. Interestingly, Thomas also relates the activities of these English warriors to the post-Conquest *silvatici*, who we have already seen, were a warrior fraternity that is comparable, in many senses, to the Welsh *ynfydion*, see *English and Normans*, p. 63.

...peace was made between those who before that were enemies. And they made a solemn pledge upon relics that neither would make peace with the king without the other, and neither of them would betray the other.¹⁰²

The actions of these two Welsh warriors following this pledge is very interesting, Owain's war band joined forces with both the warriors of Madog ap Rhiddid and the dissident 'Saxons' in an inter-ethnic pact of violence which is highly reminiscent of the one made between the *fian* band of the sons of Donn Désa and the British warrior leader Ingcél Cáech in the fictional Irish tale *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*.¹⁰³ These three war bands further swelled their ranks with local *ynfydyon* warrior-youths and ravaged the coastal territories, plundering West Wales in a similar manner to the *díberg* raids undertaken in that Irish tale. The *Brut's* description of their activities cited already in chapter 2 is worth repeating in this context:

...and for the second time they went and summoned *ynfydyon* from Ceredigion to add to their numbers, and they made for the land by night and burned it and slew all they found in it, and plundered others and took others with them in fetters and sold them to their folk or sent them bound to the ships.¹⁰⁴

Provoked by external cultural forces which threatened to undermine traditional warrior norms (just as the traditional warrior order of the sons of Donn Désa had been threatened by the peaceful rule of king Conaire) the *ynfydyon* united with other like-minded war bands who would, under normal circumstances, be mortal enemies, and together they indulged in an orgy of violent behaviour and traditional slave-raiding activities.

Cadwgan's failure to control the disruptive behaviour of his wayward son appears to have exasperated Henry I who subsequently confiscated Cadwgan's territory and held him hostage at the royal court.¹⁰⁵ Cadwgan's fall from grace did not last for long as following the death

¹⁰² "A hynny a gauas, a gwneuthur hedwch rwyg y rei a oedynt ynn elynyon kyn no hynny. Ac ymaruoll uchbenn creireu a wnaethant hyt na hedychei un a'r brenhin hep y gilyd, ac na uredychei un onadunt y gilyd." *ByT*, pp. 64–65.

¹⁰³ See chapter 2.

¹⁰⁴ "Ac etwa y mae[nt] ynn trigyaw ynn teruyneu y wlat. A'r eilweith yd aethant a galw ynnfydyon Keredigyawen y chwaneau y rif, a chyrchu dros nos y wlat a'e llorci, a llad pawb o'r a gawssant yndi, ac yspeilaw ereill a dwyn ereill gantunt yg karchar, ac eu gwerthu y dynyon neu y hanuon ynn rwyem y'r llogeu, a gvedy llosci y tei a llad a gawssant o'r anyueileit." *ByT*, pp. 68–69.

¹⁰⁵ *ByT*, pp. 70–71.

of his brother Iorwerth, ruler of Powys, in 1111 Henry granted him his patrimony. Yet, Cadwgan's ascendancy in Powys was to be somewhat short-lived and he was murdered shortly afterwards by Owain's treacherous ally Madog ap Rhiddid.¹⁰⁶ At this juncture Henry I attempted to neutralise the disruptive behaviour of the traditional warriors Madog and Owain by, once again, pitting them against each other. He, therefore, forgave Owain ap Cadwgan for the rape of Nest and summoned him to the royal court. The prestigious magnetism of the English court proved too powerful for Owain and he subsequently made peace with Henry and was granted his father's lands in Powys.¹⁰⁷ Following Owain's submission it appears that Henry attempted to integrate this violent Welsh warrior into his chivalric circle. The chronicler of the *Brut y Tywysogon* suggests that Henry took a personal interest in 'rehabilitating' Owain. Indeed, he placed the following words into the mouth of the English king during a meeting he held with Owain in 1114.

This I will tell you. I am going to Normandy, and if you will come with me I will make good for you everything that I have promised. And I will make you an ordained knight.¹⁰⁸

The *Brut* subsequently reports that Owain accompanied Henry I to Normandy and he appears to have acquitted himself well there as the chronicler relates that following the expedition Owain received all that he was promised.¹⁰⁹ It would seem that another traditionally-minded warrior had been tamed by the familiar strategy of acculturation and then been received into the 'civilising' bosom of royal favour. Yet, as we shall see this was not quite the end of Owain's story.

In the following year (1115) the disenfranchised prince of Deheubarth, Gruffudd ap Rhys, returned to Wales following a long exile in Ireland and began to reassert his claim to power by behaving with traditional warrior ferocity.¹¹⁰ Gruffudd appears to have been aware of the cultural antipathy that had been simmering within Welsh society. He, therefore,

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 74–75.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 77. Furthermore, Henry's policy was successful as within just over a year Owain had captured the renegade Madog and personally removed his eyes.

¹⁰⁸ “‘*Hynn a dywedaf it. Mi a af yn Normandi, ac o deuy di gyt a mi, mi a gywiraf it pop peth o’r a edeweis it. A mi a’th wnafl yn varchawc urdawl.*’” Translation modified from Jones, *ibid.*, pp. 82–83.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. Gruffudd ap Rhys was brother of Nest and the son of Rhys ap Tewdwr, the deceased king of Deheubarth. He was, therefore, not particularly well disposed towards Owain ap Cadwgan!

adopted a strategy that consistently targeted English strongholds such as Swansea, Llandovery, Tywi and Aberystwyth. Gruffudd clearly intended to capitalise upon the tensions created by the English acculturation of the Welsh elite. He appears to have been very successful in this respect as the *Brut y Tywysogion* remarks that following Gruffudd's successful ravages

Thereupon *ynfydyon* of the land gathered to him from all sides, thinking because of that incident that he had overcome everything.¹¹¹

The chronicler's further use of the term *ynfydyon* in this instance is extremely interesting. As we have seen this was a term that was synonymous with the traditional activities of the Welsh warrior fraternity.¹¹² Babcock has noted that the term was used only five times in the whole chronicle and only in reference to Welsh nobles who attacked the invaders and settlers from England.¹¹³ He has, therefore, hypothesised that Owain ap Cadwgan and Gruffudd ap Rhys's followers were specifically referred to as *ynfydyon* because they contravened the traditional bonds of loyalty and deserted their lords, who were doing castle duty for the English.¹¹⁴ An alternative and perhaps more convincing interpretation might be that the ravages of the *ynfydyon* were an expression of deep-seated cultural anxiety emanating from traditional warriors of middling rank. This cultural reaction was directed against their elite's increasing adoption of external cultural values and ties of allegiance. It was the elite Welsh castellans standing guard over English strongholds that had been forced to defend against Gruffudd's offensives. Furthermore, as the example of Cadwgan ap Bleddyn reveals, it was the native elite rather than the youthful warriors who were busy breaking the bonds and behavioural norms of traditional society. The negative attitude of the *Brut y Tywysogion* towards the *ynfydyon* may be explained by the author's ecclesiastical sensibilities that could never condone the actions of a group so closely associated with violent disorder. The inclusion of traditional Anglo-Saxon warriors in Owain and Madog's orgy of violence in 1110 reveals that this was not simply a 'nationalistic' or ethno-centric

¹¹¹ "*Odyna yd ymgynnullasant jeueinc ymytyon y wlat o poftu attaw o tybygu goruot ohonaw ar pop peth o achawys y damwein hwnnw.*", *ByT*, pp. 88–89.

¹¹² See chapter 2.

¹¹³ Babcock, "Imbeciles", pp. 1–11. Indeed, the term is first applied in 1110, in reference to the slaving activities of Owain ap Cadwgan's warrior band in Dyfed.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 6–8.

movement.¹¹⁵ Indeed, Gruffudd ap Cynan, the king of Gwynedd, and his sons similarly allied themselves with like-minded Hiberno-Norse warriors and pursued traditional slave raiding activities in opposition to their chivalric counterparts.¹¹⁶ Such activities were not only uprisings against English domination. They were a defiant gesture of adherence to traditional warrior values in the face of the increasing infiltration of external cultural norms moulded by the reform movement.

Henry I appears to have recognised the nature of the disruptions caused by Gruffudd ap Rhys and his *ynfydyon* and in 1116 he summoned the most suitable man for removing this troublesome element. The author of the *Brut* describes his actions in the following manner:

In the meantime king Henry sent messengers to Owain ap Cadwgan to bid him come to him... And when he came, the king said to him, "Owain, my most beloved, do you know that petty thief Gruffudd ap Rhys who is rising up, as it were, against my magnates? And since I believe you are a man most true to me, I would like you to lead a host, along with my son, to drive out Gruffudd ap Rhys."¹¹⁷

Henry, therefore, continued to employ the tried and tested tactic, used so successfully by his father, of eradicating the threat posed by traditional warrior elements by employing a similar force to seek out and destroy them. Owain's subsequent actions reveal that his newly acquired chivalric persona had particularly shallow roots. Indeed, he appears to have prosecuted this royal task with the vicious brutality of a traditional warrior. The author of the *Brut* relates that Owain sent his warriors into the woods where Gruffudd ap Rhys and his forces were thought to be taking refuge and ordered his men

...not to spare the sword against man or woman, boy or girl, and whomsoever they caught they were not to let him go without killing him or hanging him or cutting off his members.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ See also chapter 4.

¹¹⁶ Wyatt, "Gruffudd", pp. 596–617.

¹¹⁷ "Yghyfrwg hynny yd anuones henri vrenhin kenhadeu at Ywein vab Cadwgan y erchi idaw dyuot attaw... A phan doeth y dywat y brenhin wrthaw, 'Vy gharedicaf i, Ywein, a atwaenosti y lleidryn gan Ruffud ap Rhys yssyd megys yn kyudi yn erbyn vy nhyweyssogyon i? A chanys credaf i dy uoti yn gyw[i]raf gwr y mi, mi a ynhaf dy uot ti yn tyweysaewc llu gyt a'm mab i y wrthlad Gruffud vab Rys.'" Translation modified from Jones, *ByT*, pp. 96–97.

¹¹⁸ "...hyl nat arbettei y cledyf nac y wr nac y vereic nac y vab nac y verch, a phwy bynhac a delhynt nas gollyghynt heb y lad neu y grogi neu trychu y aelodeu." Ibid., pp. 96–97.

It appears that Owain's men went on to enslave a large group of local people whilst carrying out these orders.¹¹⁹ We can only guess how Henry I might have reacted to such behaviour being conducted in his name as Owain's traditional savagery was to be his undoing. The *Brut* relates that following Owain's ravages some of the fugitives managed to escape to the castle at Carmarthen where they found a champion in Owain's longstanding enemy, Gerald of Windsor. These refugees subsequently complained to Gerald that they had been "plundered and pillaged" by Owain ap Cadwgan.¹²⁰ Gerald was probably aware of Owain's royal mission; however, unlike King Henry he had not forgiven the Welsh prince for the rape of his wife. He, therefore, summoned a large force that surprised Owain's war band and the Welsh prince was subsequently slain by arrow fire.¹²¹ Evidently traditional codes concerning sexual jealousy, power and honour also continued to simmer beneath the chivalric surface of Owain's old enemy.

Following Owain's death Gruffudd ap Rhys received the kingdom of Deheubarth from Henry I, yet, this did not entirely restrain his traditional sensibilities. During the final year of his life (1136) he attacked the English forces at Cardigan together with the sons of Gruffudd ap Cynan, king of Gwynedd.¹²² Once again this native assault was characterised by slave raiding.¹²³ Moreover, Gruffudd's allies in this conflict, Owain and Cadwaladr ap Cynan of Gwynedd, were to remain heavily involved in the Hiberno-Norse slave supply network and they continued to carry out slave raiding activities during the central years of the twelfth century.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, the English acculturation of Welsh princes continued at a pace. This is, perhaps, best exemplified by the career of Rhys, the lord of Deheubarth, son of the recalcitrant Gruffudd ap Rhys. Rhys, it seems, had not inherited his father's tradi-

¹¹⁹ The *Brut* notes that Owain's men followed the tracks of a multitude of fleeing common folk and seized them before they were able to reach the safety of Carmarthen castle, *ibid.*, pp. 96–99.

¹²⁰ "...ac yn menegi y ry yspeilaw o Ywein ap Cadwgan...", *ibid.*, pp. 98–99.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 98–99.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 114–115.

¹²³ *Ibid.* The chronicler notes that Owain and Cadwaladr obtained "...an exceedingly great number of captives and spoils."

¹²⁴ For examples see Wyatt, "Gruffudd", p. 615. Indeed, it appears that slave raiding continued to be an important activity for the dynasty of Gruffudd ap Cynan. The *ByT* relates that in 1165 Gruffudd's grandson, Dafydd ab Owain, ravaged Tegeingl "...ac y mudawd y dynyon a'e haniueileit y gyt ac ef hyt yn Dyffryn Clwyd" ("...removed the people and their cattle with him to Dyffryn Clwyd.") *ByT*, pp. 144–145. See also below.

tional sensibilities. He became one of Henry II's most trusted magnates and acted as the king's justiciar in South Wales during the final quarter of the twelfth century.¹²⁵ Rhys adopted the manners and customs of his English counterparts and became an enthusiastic patron of the reformed religious orders in Wales.¹²⁶ Yet, in one significant respect Rhys did continue to adhere to more traditional norms of behaviour for he maintained a prolific number of concubines (one of whom was his own niece).¹²⁷ Rhys' continuing adherence to resource polygyny had predictable consequences and following his death in 1197 his kingdom lapsed into a bitter internecine conflict. The chronicler of the *Brut* followed these events with some concern.

After the death of the Lord Rhys, Gruffudd, his son, succeeded after him in the rule of his territory; whom Maelgwn, his brother, seized when the said Maelgwyn, after having been banished before from his territory, and his men along with him and the war-band of Gwenwynwyn along with them, came to Aberystwyth and gained possession of the town and of the castle and slew many of his people and carried off others into slavery and gained possession of all Ceredigion and its castles.¹²⁸

It appears that whilst traditional patterns of patriarchal power and illegitimate inheritance were maintained then the ravages of warrior fraternities would continue to be a prevalent feature of Welsh society. As we shall, see this phenomenon was by no means restricted to the Welsh communities.

Acculturation and Antipathy in Twelfth-Century Scotland

During the final quarter of the eleventh century intensive slave raiding activities were conducted by Scottish warrior fraternities against the North of England. These activities were largely undertaken by forces under the control of the Scottish king Malcolm Canmore. The Durham chronicler commented that during Malcolm's reign he had

¹²⁵ Davies, *Coexistence*, pp. 222–223.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 224. Similarly, Cadwgan ap Bleddyn of Powys sired children by at least five separate partners, *ibid.*, p. 71.

¹²⁸ “*Gwedy marw yr Arglwyd Rys y dynessaawd Gruffud, y vab, yn y ol yn llywodraeth y kyfoeth; yr hwn a delis Maelgwyn, y vrawt, pan doeth y dywededic Vaelgwyn, wedy ry alludaw kyn [n/o] hyny o’e gyuoeth, a’e wyr y gyt ac eff, a theulu Gwenwynwyn y gyt ac wynt, hyt yn Aber Ystwyth a gweresyn y dref a’r castell a llad llawer o’e bobyl a diwyn ereill yg keithiwet a gweresyn holl Geredigawen a’e Chestyll.*” *ByT*, pp. 178–179.

harried Northumbria five times "...with savage devastation, and carried off the wretched inhabitants as captives, to reduce them to slavery."¹²⁹ Malcolm's raids upon England appear to have been characterised by female abduction and violence directed against Church institutions.¹³⁰ Furthermore, the court of the Scottish king appears to have been a refuge for disruptive English warriors and noblemen who had been expelled from England following the Norman Conquest.¹³¹ Malcolm was a willing patron for these disenfranchised individuals and, as such, would seem to have been something of a figurehead for traditional warrior elements within the British Isles. The Durham chronicler certainly seems to have regarded him as such and describes Malcolm to be a man "...to wit of the greatest ferocity and with a bestial deposition..."¹³² Yet, other twelfth-century English chroniclers take a slightly more positive view of the Scottish king, predominantly because of his marriage to the Anglo-Saxon princess Margaret, the grand-niece of Edward the Confessor.¹³³ Although this marriage had not been in the

¹²⁹ "Quinquies namque illam atroci depopulatione altrivit, et miseros indigenas in servitutem redigendos abduxit captivos." *HR, SMOO*, vol. ii, p. 221, translation from Anderson, *SAEC*, pp. 112–113.

¹³⁰ The Durham chronicler notes that in 1070 Malcolm's forces ravaged Northumbria and burned the Church of St. Peter in Wearmouth and many other Churches besides. Following this attack he is said to have led many "youths and girls" ("*juvenes vero et juven-culae*") away into slavery so that Scotland was filled with the "slaves and handmaids of the English race" ("*Repleta est ergo Scotia servis et ancillis Anglici generis.*") *HR, SMOO*, vol. ii, pp. 190–192, translation from Anderson, *SAEC*, pp. 91–93. Furthermore, in 1079 Malcolm once again raided Northumbria and his army is said to have assaulted the Priory at Hexham. Again a multitude of men and women were said to have been led away into slavery, *HR, SMOO*, vol. ii, pp. 36–38. This account is supported by the *ASC E*, 1079 (Swanton), pp. 213–214 and Ælred of Rievaulx, *De Sanctis Ecclesie Haugustaldensis*, in *The Priory of Hexham, its Chroniclers, Endowments and Annals*, J. Raine (ed.), *Ssoc*, 44, 1863, pp. 173–203, 177–180, see also p. 287 ns. 44 and 45, above. The *Scottish Chronicle of Melrose* also notes that Malcolm's forces ravaged the North of England in these years, however, it does not mention his slave raiding activities, see Anderson, *ESSH*, vol. ii, pp. 23 and 45. Nevertheless, the English accounts concerning Malcolm's slave raids are supported by the late medieval Scottish historians John of Fordun and Walter Bower, see *C&N*, vol. i, pp. 203–204 and *Scotichron.*, lib. iv, vol. iii, pp. 57, 65.

¹³¹ William of Malmesbury notes that Malcolm "...had a warm welcome for all runaways on the English side..." ("*...Malcolmus omnes Anglorum perfugas libenter recipiebat...*") *GRA*, vol. i, pp. 462–463. See also *HR, SMOO*, vol. ii, pp. 190–192 and *ASC D* (Swanton), p. 201. These disaffected warriors and nobles included Edgar the Ætheling, Earl Gospatric of Northumbria and a certain Mærleswein, see also Duncan *Scotland*, pp. 118–119.

¹³² "...homo scilicet ferocissimus mentemque bestialem gerens...", *HR, SMOO*, vol. ii, pp. 36–37.

¹³³ Duncan, *Scotland*, p. 119.

direct political interest of the English elite it was regarded by many ecclesiastical commentators to have been a fortuitous union. William of Malmesbury felt that Margaret had been a pious and civilising influence upon the Scottish king and his people.¹³⁴ Even the critical Durham chronicler conceded that "...by her zeal and industry the king himself laid aside his barbarity of manners, and became more honourable and more refined."¹³⁵ Margaret's panegyrist, Turgot, prior of Durham, also praised the queen for her devotion to religion and her adherence to the promotion of ecclesiastical reform.¹³⁶ During Malcolm's reign Margaret appears to have acted as a conduit through which reform values and chivalric sensibilities were transmitted into the upper echelons of Scottish society. One significant consequence of Margaret's English connections was that her sons were raised and educated at the English court. As we have already seen this upbringing appears to have imbued these Scottish princes with the chivalric and reform-minded sensibilities of the English elite. However, such cultural intrusions at the highest level of Scottish society also created significant internal tensions and, as in Wales, they encouraged increasing levels of cultural antipathy towards this English infiltration.

The vehement nature of this cultural antipathy was to become apparent in the years following Malcolm Canmore's death. Malcolm had six sons by Margaret and at least two by his other wife Ingibjorg, daughter of the Earl Thorfinn the mighty of Orkney.¹³⁷ Upon Malcolm's death it must have seemed that a violent succession dispute was inevitable. However, it appears that the education of Malcolm's sons at the English

¹³⁴ *GRA*, pp. 726–727.

¹³⁵ "...cujus studio et industria rex ipse, deposita morum barbarie, factus est honestior atque civilior." *HR, SMOO*, vol. ii, p. 192.

¹³⁶ Turgot had been Margaret's personal chaplain and he appears to have known her well. His biography/hagiography of Margaret was written down sometime during the first decade of the twelfth century see *Vita S. Margaretæ Scotorum Reginæ, Symeonis Dunelmensis Opera et Collectanea*, J.H. Hinde (ed.), *SSoc*, 51, 1868, pp. 234–254, translation in Anderson, *ESSH*, vol. ii, pp. 59–88. Interestingly, Turgot credited Margaret with freeing many English individuals that had been enslaved by her husband's warriors, *ibid.*, p. 76. There has been some debate over the authorship of this source for a summary see L.L. Honeycutt, "The Idea of the Perfect Princess: *The Life of St. Margaret* in the reign of Matilda II", *ANS*, xii, 1989, pp. 81–98.

¹³⁷ The fate of Ingibjorg is unknown; however, Duncan feels that Malcolm did not put her away. Nevertheless, he suggests that Ingibjorg must have died before Malcolm married Margaret. Similarly, Barrow mentions Malcolm's marriage to Ingibjorg but does not discuss her fate, *Kingship and Unity*, p. 27. Yet, given what we know about the significance of polygyny for the traditional 'Celtic' elite it seems perfectly feasible that Malcolm maintained both wives simultaneously, see Duncan, *Scotland*, pp. 118–119.

court had tempered their tendencies towards such fraternal competition. Indeed, it was Malcolm's more traditionally minded brother, Donald Bán, who seized the throne of Scotland.¹³⁸ Donald appears to have acted as a figurehead of a movement that wished to resist the increasing influence being exerted by the English court upon the Scottish royal circle. This is evident from the accounts given by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicler who comments that following Malcom's death "...the Scots elected Donald, brother of Malcolm, king, and drove out all the English who had been with King Malcolm before."¹³⁹ The seizure of the Scottish throne by a traditional warrior leader was clearly not welcomed at the English court. The English king William Rufus subsequently supported Duncan, Malcolm's eldest son by Ingibjorg of Orkney, in a bid to regain his patrimony and oust Donald from power.¹⁴⁰ Duncan subsequently marched north with an army of "English and French" ("*Engliscra 7 Frenciscra*") supporters and succeeded in removing Donald from the throne of Scotland.¹⁴¹ However, Duncan's newfound hegemony was to be extremely short-lived; his ascendance to the Scottish throne soon resulted in dramatic traditional backlash against his importation of English and continental warriors into the Scottish fold. The author of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* once again comments upon the events noting that Donald was expelled by Duncan who was received as king.

But afterwards some of the Scots gathered themselves together, and slew almost all his (Duncan's) followers; and he himself escaped with a few. Thereafter they were reconciled, on the condition that he should never again introduce English or French into the land.¹⁴²

Yet, it appears to have been extremely difficult for Duncan to allay the concerns of Scottish warriors regarding his chivalric affiliations and sensibilities. In spite of an apparent reconciliation with the more

¹³⁸ Donald's succession, thereby, adhered to traditional Scottish custom, which dictated that able bodied adult males within one generation of the king (i.e. brothers or cousins) should succeed to the throne rather than sons or nephews, see Barrow, *Kingship and Unity*, pp. 24, 31.

¹³⁹ "*Da Scottas þa Dufenal to cyngre gecuron Melcolmes broðer. 7 ealle þa Englisce út adrefon.*" *TSCP*, p. 228 translation from Swanton, *ASC E*, p. 228.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* Duncan had been at the English court since 1072 when he was given as a hostage by Malcolm to William the Conqueror.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² "*Ac þa Scottas hi eft sume ge gaderoden. 7 for neah | ealle his mænu ofslogan. 7 he sylf mid feaxum æt berst. Syððan hi weurdon sehte. on þa geråd þ he næfre eft Englisce ne Frencisce into þam lande ne ge logige.*" *Ibid.*

traditional Gaelic factions in his kingdom he was slain within a year by the mormaer of Mearns, one of Donald Bán's supporters.¹⁴³ Furthermore, William of Malmesbury remarks that Duncan's half brother, Edmund, had assisted in this killing. It, therefore, appears that not all of Margaret's sons had adopted the mores of their English hosts.¹⁴⁴ Following Duncan's assassination Donald once again seized the Scottish throne. As a result, William Rufus sponsored a further expedition which was to end in Donald's subsequent capture and the removal of his eyes.¹⁴⁵ This expedition was headed by Edgar, Malcolm's eldest son by Margaret. Edgar seized the reins of power following Donald's departure but he appears to have pragmatically resisted the temptation to introduce a wave of southern colonists into Scotland. Nevertheless, his ascent to the throne was to draw the Scottish elite further into the cultural orbit of their southern neighbour. Following his death in 1107, Edgar was succeeded by his younger brothers Alexander I (1107–1124) and then David I (1124–1153). Both men had been raised at the English court and tutored in the values of continental warfare and reform. Both encouraged their followers to adopt revised warrior mores and both established and patronised continental-style monastic institutions in Scotland.¹⁴⁶ As we have seen, David I also endowed many of English acquaintances with lands in the south of his kingdom.¹⁴⁷ He also became a highly praised champion for reform within the Scottish Church.¹⁴⁸ Yet, such cultural intrusions at the highest level undoubtedly created tensions amongst traditional Gaelic elements within his kingdom. David appears to have recognised that he required the support of these traditional factions and he pragmatically indulged and tolerated their unchivalrous mores.¹⁴⁹ His tolerance in this respect has resulted in the slightly disconcerted and ambivalent portrayal of his career extant

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 230, these events are confirmed by *The Chronicle of Melrose*, see Anderson, *ESSH*, vol. ii, p. 89, see also Duncan, *Scotland*, p. 125.

¹⁴⁴ *GRA*, pp. 724–727.

¹⁴⁵ Perhaps, fittingly, Donald was the final king to be buried at the traditional resting place of Scottish-Gaelic royalty at the monastery of Iona. See Barrow, *Kingship and Unity*, p. 31.

¹⁴⁶ Barrow, *Kingship and Unity*, p. 81, Davies, *Domination*, 17 and Duncan, *Scotland*, pp. 131–132, 144–148.

¹⁴⁷ Duncan, *Scotland*, pp. 135–7, 139–41.

¹⁴⁸ For examples see *SMOO*, vol. ii, pp. 330–331, see also above.

¹⁴⁹ See below.

within the twelfth-century English chronicles.¹⁵⁰ These twelfth-century accounts highlight the tensions and difficulties created by the ‘top down’ infiltration of reforming ideals into the warrior communities of Gaelic Scotland. Indeed, such tensions are readily apparent when we examine the events that surround the battle of the Standard of 1138.

A Clash of Cultures? The Battle of the Standard, 1138

The Battle of the Standard was triggered by events in England and by David’s close connection with the English court. In 1136 civil war broke out in England as a result of the succession dispute between Stephen of Blois and the Empress Matilda. David who had been a vassal of Matilda’s father, Henry I, appears to have used this dispute as an opportunity to press his territorial claims upon the north of England.¹⁵¹ In 1136 his forces invaded Northumbria and seized Carlisle and Newcastle.¹⁵² The Scottish king’s warriors periodically ravaged the northern province for the following two years in spite of a peace settlement that David had reached with King Stephen in 1136. David appears to have deployed these raids as a means to consolidate his authority and to redirect the cultural antipathy of his more traditional warriors away from his own chivalric contingent. By focussing the attentions of traditional factions such as the Galwegians upon an external conflict with their old enemy, David may have hoped to temporarily alleviate the tensions that were simmering within his own kingdom.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Barrow, *David I of Scotland (1124–1153) The Balance of the Old and the New*, pp. 6–7.

¹⁵¹ See G.W.S. Barrow, “The Scots and the North of England” in E. King (ed.), *The Anarchy of King Stephen’s Reign* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 231–253, 245–246. See also K.J. Stringer, “State Building in Twelfth Century Britain: David I, King of Scots and Northern England.” in J.C. Appleby and P. Dalton (eds.), *Government, Religion and Society in Northern England 1000–1700* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997), pp. 40–62 and W. Croft-Dickinson, *Scotland from the Earliest Times to 1603* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 66.

¹⁵² See, Stringer, “State building”, pp. 40–50 and Barrow, “Scots and the North”, pp. 245–247.

¹⁵³ The fragile nature of David’s political hegemony over the more traditional Gaelic regions is highlighted by R. Andrew Macdonald who has suggested that David had minimal control over the warriors of Galloway who looked to their own traditional leaders, Ulgric, Donald and Fergus in this period. See, “Rebels without a cause? The relations of Fergus of Galloway and Somerled of Argyll with the Scottish Kings, 1153–1164” in E.J. Cowan and R. Andrew MacDonal (eds.), *Alba, Celtic Scotland in the Middle Ages* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000), pp. 166–186, 171.

Stephen's panegyrist makes it clear that David deliberately granted his more traditional followers a licence to conduct pillaging and slave raiding activities.¹⁵⁴

So King David . . . sent out a decree through Scotland and summoned all to arms, and giving them free license he commanded them to commit against the English, without pity, the most savage and cruel deeds they could invent.¹⁵⁵

Similarly, Henry, archdeacon of Huntingdon, remarked with horror that

...the king of Scots, under cover of piety, on account of the oath he had sworn to King Henry's daughter, commanded his men in barbarous deeds. For they ripped open pregnant women, and tore out the unborn foetuses. They tossed children on the points of their lances. They dismembered priests on their altars. They put on to the bodies of the slain the heads cut off crucifixes, and changing them round, they put back on the crucifixes the heads of the dead. Everywhere that the Scots attacked would be filled with horror and barbarity, accompanied by the cries of women, the wailing of the aged, the groans of the dying, the despair of the living.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ In early medieval Irish and Scottish society kings had punctuated their reigns with *crech rí* or 'royal prey'. These were plundering expeditions conducted against neighbouring territories that were intended to assert leadership, promote group solidarity and provide rewards for followers. Warriors, thereby, sold their loyalty for the symbols of prestige and power attainable by plunder. The acquisition of slaves and booty were the primary motivation for such raids. Malcolm I was said to have made such a raid on England in the second quarter of the tenth century during which his army seized a multitude of people and cattle, see *Chronicle of the Kings of Scotland, Chronicles of the Picts, Chronicles of the Scots*, W.F. Skene (ed.) (Edinburgh: H.M. General Register House, 1867), p. 10, see also Anderson, *ESSH*, vol. i, p. 452. The activities of David's army in 1138 should be regarded within this context. In addition, Stringer has argued that David may have deployed his more traditional factions as a means to instil terror into the population of Northern England over whom he was attempting to secure dominion. See Stringer, "State Building in Twelfth Century Britain", p. 44, Barrow, "Scots and the North", pp. 245–247, Duncan, *Scotland*, p. 114 and Ó Croínín, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 74.

¹⁵⁵ "*Rex igitur David, sic enim uocabatur, perpenso per Scotiam edicto omnes in arma commouit, laxatisque permissionis suae frenis, quicquid in Anglos truculentius, quicquid excogitare possent inhumanus, remota pietate peragere præcepit.*" GS, pp. 54–55.

¹⁵⁶ "*Rex namque Scotorum, quia sacramentum fecerat filie regis Henrici, per suos execrabiliter egit. Mulieres enim grauidas findebant, et fetus anticipatos abstrahabant. Pueros super acumina lancearum iactabant. Presbiteros super altaria detruncabant. Crucifixorum capita abscisa super cesorum corpora ponebant. Mortuorum uero capita mutuantibus super crucifixis reponebant. Quicumque igitur Scoti attingebant, omnia erant plena horroris, plena immanitatis, aderat clamor mulierum, eiulatus senum, morientium gemitus, uiuentium desperatio.*" HA, pp. 710–711.

Hysterical accounts such as Henry's would appear to be both sensationalist and propagandist in nature. Yet, we must ask ourselves who were these twelfth-century authors intending to shock? When we examine the various accounts that bitterly condemned the savage behaviour of the Scottish warriors prior to the battle of the Standard, then we see that they had two things in common. First, they all constitute a clear expression of the newly constructed 'superior' identity discussed earlier.¹⁵⁷ Secondly, they almost all emanate from writers within the milieu of the ecclesiastical reform movement. Ælred of Rievaulx (1109–1167) was a Cistercian monk, based at Hexham, who had spent time at the court of King David I. Richard of Hexham (*fl.* 1141) was prior at the Augustinian house there; John of Hexham (*fl.* 1180) was his successor. John of Worcester was a monk writing during the first half of the twelfth century at the monastery reformed by Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester. A monk residing at St. Cuthbert's in Durham composed the Durham chronicle, attributed to Symeon of Durham, during the first half of the twelfth century.¹⁵⁸ Robert, Bishop of Bath, most probably compiled the *Gesta Stephani* during the central years of the twelfth century. It should be noted that several of these writers hailed from houses that had been directly affected by the ravages of Scottish warriors. Furthermore, an acknowledgement of the reforming sensibilities of these writers is extremely important for understanding their vehement antipathy towards the activities of the Scottish forces. Indeed, their attitude towards the Scots must be regarded within the context of wider reform concerns about the conduct of the warrior elite in general. These concerns are perhaps best exemplified by the complaints of John of Hexham concerning the conduct of the David's traditional warrior contingent.

... They slew all the men, and bound together with cords the maidens and widows, naked, in troops, and drove them away into Scotland under the yoke of slavery... The Scots also broke into the sanctuaries of the Lord and in the consecrated places irreverently committed acts violent, lewd and execrable.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ See Gillingham, "Conquering", pp. 66–84.

¹⁵⁸ See D. Rollason (ed.), *Symeon, Historian of Durham and the North* (Stamford: Shaun Tyas, 1998) for the debates over the authorship of this chronicle.

¹⁵⁹ "*Non pepercit seui, ætati, aut ordini, conditioni cuiusquam vel professioni. Prægnantes cum parvulis dissecuerunt, virgines et viduas, occisis cunctis maribus, funiculis colligatas nudas cateruatim sub iugo servitutis in Scotiam abegerunt... sanctuaria quoque Domini Scotti confregerunt, et in sac-*

John of Hexham's concerns regarding the activities of the Scottish warriors were fourfold. Firstly, he complained that these warriors had carried out 'uncivilised' slave raiding activities of an overtly sexual nature.¹⁶⁰ Secondly, and as a corollary of this, John implied that these warriors were debauched and lacking in moral fibre. Thirdly, he suggests that they were unrestrained, lawless and indiscriminately violent. Indeed, many of the English accounts regarding these warriors imply that they lacked centralised control and note their failure to adhere to revised codes of warrior behaviour.¹⁶¹ Finally, John clearly felt that these warriors were imbued with an almost pagan like ethos that motivated them to violate the Truce of God by targeting religious institutions and personnel.¹⁶²

It has been argued that the reaction of English chroniclers, like John of Hexham, towards the Scottish activities in 1138 can be explained by the Scottish warriors' employment of 'total war' tactics in order to accumulate slaves.¹⁶³ The alleged annihilation of infants and the aged by the Scottish forces can be seen to have strong anthropological analogies with the activities of slave raiding groups in other societies.¹⁶⁴ Yet, this does not explain the English chroniclers' hysterical accounts regarding the anti-ecclesiastical activities conducted by supposedly Christianised Scottish warriors. It was certainly the case that these writers were attempting to dehumanise and 'de-Christianize' their Scottish foes by portraying them as sub-human heathens. Nevertheless, the proliferation of these accounts does suggest that there may well have been an element of truth in them. Indeed, as in Welsh society, the reform norms and revised codes of behaviour that were infiltrating into the circle of the Scottish elite would have posed a direct threat to traditional warrior practices and expressions of power and virility. The slave raiding activities and anti-ecclesiastical attacks that characterised the Scottish raids upon England may well have constituted a deliberate and symbolic

ratis locis violenta, obscena, et abhominanda irreverenter perpetraverunt." *SMOO*, vol. ii, p. 290, translation from Anderson, *SAEC*, pp. 181–182.

¹⁶⁰ See also note 130, above.

¹⁶¹ See chapter 2.

¹⁶² See also notes 130 and 159, above.

¹⁶³ Gillingham, "Conquering", pp. 70–73 and Strickland, "Slaughter", pp. 41–61.

¹⁶⁴ Patterson, *Social Death*, pp. 120–121. The twelfth-century Icelandic source *Landnámabók* notes that similar tactics had been employed by Norse warriors, *Landnámabók*, vol. ii, pp. 379–380.

reaction towards this cultural infiltration.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, as the English Church assumed an increasingly hard line against the overtly violent and sexual behaviour of the warrior elite, it seems that traditional elements within Scottish society expressed their antipathy towards these revised values and norms. They did so by reasserting their affiliation to traditional warrior practices and expressions of identity and power: through slave taking, female abduction and excessive violence.

The forces of cultural antipathy were also creating significant internal tensions within the Scottish communities. These tensions are highlighted by the English chroniclers' accounts of dissent and conflict within the Scottish ranks prior to the battle of the Standard. The traditional Galwegian contingents in David's forces were at the very heart of this internal discord. Indeed, they appear to have had little, if any, respect for his royal authority.¹⁶⁶ These were the same warriors that had been consistently singled out by the English chroniclers as being heavily involved in slave raiding and anti-clerical activities. Moreover, the traditional sensibilities of these warriors seem to have clashed dramatically with the chivalric values and norms of behaviour of the knights of King David's retinue. Ælred of Rievaulx remarked that during David's excursion into Northumbria in 1136 that his 'civilised' knights had attempted to prevent the enslavement of English individuals at the hands of the more barbarous Galwegian forces. Ælred relates that

Hence it was that, when the most cruel nation of the Galwegians raged with unheard brutality, and spared not sex nor age, *our countrymen* (*nostrates*) who were with the king (David) were moved by compassion and sent many rescued from their hands, to Hexham, as a sure defence of their safety.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ It is acknowledged that Scottish concerns regarding Canterbury's highly politicized claims to primacy over the Scottish Church also may have provided a significant contributory edge to this antipathy, see M. Brett, "Canterbury's Perspective on Church Reform and Ireland, 1070–1115" in Bracken and Ó Riain-Raedel, *Ireland and Europe*, pp. 13–35, 19.

¹⁶⁶ See above.

¹⁶⁷ "*Hinc est quod cum impiissima gens Galwensium inaudita crudelitate sævirent, nec sexui parcerent, nec ætati; nostrates, qui erant cum rege, pietate commoti, plures de eorum ereptos manibus ad Hagustaldunum quasi ad certum sue salutis auxilium transposuerunt.*" *De Sanctis Ecclesiæ Haugustaldensis*, p. 183 translation from Anderson, *SAEC*, p. 171. Similarly, John of Hexham noted that David I emancipated some of the maidens and widows that had been enslaved by his forces and restored them into the care of Robert, prior of Hexham in 1138, see *SMOO*, vol. ii, p. 290.

Such apparently noble behaviour may well have been regarded as a sign of cultural affiliation and indeed intrusion by David's more traditional warrior contingent. The Scottish king appears to have found it extremely difficult to control the antipathy of these traditional factions towards his own chivalric retinue. This is best exemplified by Ælred of Rievaulx's account of events within the Scottish camp prior to the battle of the Standard. Ælred relates that an argument broke out between David's knights and the Galwegian leaders concerning who would lead the initial attack against the English. He felt that this dispute had become extremely heated and as a result King David had been forced to intervene and restrain both factions "...lest a disturbance should suddenly arise out of this altercation."¹⁶⁸ Ælred also recounts that one of David's knights, Robert de Bruce, attempted to dissuade the king from fighting alongside these traditional warriors and against his English brethren.¹⁶⁹ The words that the Ælred places into Robert's mouth are very illuminating.

Against who do you bear arms today and lead this huge army? Against the English, truly and the Normans. O king, are not these they with whom you have ever found useful counsel and ready help, and willing obedience besides? ... New to you is this confidence in Galwegians, attacking with arms today those by whose aid hitherto you have ruled the Scots with affection, the Galwegians with terror.¹⁷⁰

Interestingly, Ælred suggests that when David refused to step back from the brink of conflict Robert de Bruce broke his oath of fealty to the

¹⁶⁸ "*Tunc rex utrosque compescens, ne tumultus hac altercatione subito nasceretur, Galwensium cessit voluntati.*" Ælred noted with concern that David "(subsequently) yielded to the will of the Galwegians." *Relatio de Standardo*, CRSHR, vol. iii, pp. 190–191, translation from Anderson, *SAEC*, p. 199.

¹⁶⁹ David I had granted the lordship of Annandale (a district of some 200,000 acres adjacent to the English border) to Robert of Brus. Moreover, Robert was an ancestor of the later Scottish royal line, see Barrow, *Kingship and Unity*, p. 32.

¹⁷⁰ "*Adversum quos hodie levas arma, et imensum hunc ducis exercitum? Adversum Anglos certe et Normannos. O rex, nonne isti sunt quorum semper et utile consilium et auxilium promptum, gratum insuper obsequium, invenisti? ... Nova tibi est in Galwensibus ista securitas, qui eos hodie armis petis per quos hactenus amabilis Scottis, terribilis Galwensibus, imperasti.*" *Ibid.*, pp. 192–193, translation modified from Anderson, *SAEC*, pp. 192–193. Thomas comments that "this speech was a tricky piece of rhetoric, trying to persuade the Scottish king that his interests lay with the English and Normans, not with the Scots and Galwegians, but the distinction between the two opposed pairs of peoples is strongly emphasized in it." *English and Normans*, p. 313.

king and deserted his forces.¹⁷¹ Evidently, Robert preferred to invalidate his most important social relationship rather than be associated with the ‘uncivilised’ warriors of David’s army. His actions in this instance may be juxtaposed neatly with those of the Welsh *ynwrydion* who preferred to side with more traditional forces (with whom they were normally bitter enemies) and break their oaths of fealty to their ‘civilised’ and ‘chivalric’ Welsh lords.¹⁷²

The battle of the Standard is portrayed within the English chronicles using the language of holy war. Thurstan the reform-minded Archbishop of York personally assembled and commanded the English army.¹⁷³ Prior to the battle it appears that Thurstan gave the English troops papal sanction for their enterprise and absolved them of their sins.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, the chroniclers’ description of the English army is characterised by crusading language. The English forces were portrayed as model warriors of the reform movement, as the *milites dei* (soldiers of God). This is best exemplified by the account of Ælred of Rievaulx who described these troops in the following manner:

Shield was joined to shield, side pressed to side, lances were rained with pennons unfurled, hauberks glittered in the brilliance of the sun; priests white clad in their sacred robes, went round the army with crosses and

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 195. Robert’s rejection of fealty to David is also noted by Richard of Hexham, see *DGRS, CRSHR*, vol. iii, pp. 161–162. Robert was in a difficult position because he held lands both north and south of the English border. The conflict at the Standard, therefore, presented him with a dilemma of conflicting interests. Nevertheless, Ælred clearly felt that it was David’s association with traditional Gaelic factions that had prompted Robert into choosing sides.

¹⁷² See above.

¹⁷³ The *Vita Thurstani* relates that the Archbishop actually took part in the battle and claims that he and his knights, slew several thousand Scots, “*Vita Thurstani Archiepiscopi*” in *Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops*, J. Raine (ed.) (London: Longman, 1886), vol. ii, p. 266. Henry of Huntingdon, however, feels that the Archbishop merely coordinated the English forces and sent Ralph, bishop of the Orkneys to the battlefield as his representative, *HA*, p. 713. See also D. Nicholl, *Thurstan Archbishop of York (1114–1140)* (York: Stonegate Press, 1964), pp. 227–228. Thurstan certainly had a vested interest in the conflict as York had claimed primacy over the Scottish Church and had secured papal backing over this issue. See Hugh the Chanter, *The History of the Church of York 1066–1127*, C. Johnson (ed. and trans.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. xlv–liv and Duncan, *Scotland*, pp. 131, 219.

¹⁷⁴ “... *ac deinde absolutionem et benedictionem Dei et suam eis sollemniter tribuit... Tunc crucem suam et sancti Petri vexillum, ac suos homines eis tradidit.*” “... then he (Archbishop Thurstan) solemnly bestowed upon them absolution, and God’s blessing and his own... Then he gave them his cross, and the banner of St. Peter (i.e., the banner of St. Peter’s, York) and his vassals.” *DGRS, CRSHR*, vol. iii, pp. 161–162. See also *Relatio de Standardo*, p. 182.

relics of the saints, and most becomingly fortified the people with speech as well as prayer.¹⁷⁵

The Scottish forces on the other hand, were depicted in terms akin to those that might be applied to a pagan horde. Richard of Hexham described them like this:

...that execrable army, savager than any race of heathen, yielding honour to neither God nor man... In front of the battle were the Picts (i.e. Galwegians), in the middle the king (David) with his knights and his English; the rest of the barbarians extended round them on all sides, roaring.¹⁷⁶

Accounts such as these have prompted Gillingham into arguing that contemporary writers viewed the Standard

...not just as a battle between Scots and English but as a titanic and ferocious struggle between two opposing cultures, the civilised and the savage.¹⁷⁷

Gillingham somewhat undermines this perceptive comment by moving on to portray the battle as, essentially, a struggle of 'nascent nationalism' between the English and the 'Celtic' Scots.¹⁷⁸ Yet, the words which Ælred of Rievaulx placed into the mouth of Robert de Bruce reveals that he, at least, understood the ethnic-political situation to be far more complex than this. Indeed, when we examine the sources closely then we see that a myriad of contingent forces made up the Scottish host at the Standard. Although the Scottish army was led by David's chivalric contingent it seems clear that his troops were very much in a minority. Contemporary writers reveal that the Scottish forces were

¹⁷⁵ "Scutis scuta junguntur, lateribus latera conseruntur, laxatis vexillis eriguntur lanceæ, ad solis splendorem lorice candescunt; sacerdotes sacris vestibus candidati, cum crucibus et reliquiis Sanctorum, exercitum ambiebant, et sermone simul et oratione populum decentissime roborabant." *Relatio de Standardo*, pp. 191–192, translation from Anderson, *SAEC*, pp. 201–202.

¹⁷⁶ "Igitur ille detestandus exercitus, omni paganorum genere atrocior, nec Deo nec hominibus reverentiam deferens... In fronte belli erant Picti, in medio rex cum militibus et Anglis suis; cetera barbaries undique circumfusa fremebat." *DGRS, CRSHR*, vol. iii, pp. 151–152, 163, translation from Anderson, *SAEC*, pp. 180, 202. The noise made by traditional warriors in the Scottish army might constitute an example of the war howl employed by *fian* warriors and discussed in chapter 2.

¹⁷⁷ Gillingham, "Conquering", p. 74.

¹⁷⁸ See Gillingham, "Conquering", pp. 74–75 and "Henry of Huntingdon and the Twelfth Century Revival of the English Nation" in S. Forde et al. (eds.), *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages* (Leeds: University of Leeds, School of English, 1995), pp. 75–101, 79–80.

made up of a conglomerate of traditional warrior groups from many different backgrounds which reflected the hybrid entity of the Scottish kingdom at this time. For example, Richard of Hexham noted that David's "impious army" ("*nefandus exercitus*") was composed of

Normans (probably David's knights), Germans (presumably Norseman from the Isles), English, of Northumbrians and Cumbrians (traditional Saxon warriors from the north), of (men of) Teviotdale and Lothian, of Picts (who are commonly called Galwegians) and of Scots (traditional Gaelic warrior elements).¹⁷⁹

Ælred of Rievaulx, similarly, commented that the Scottish king's army contained men from Cumbria, Teviotdale, Galloway, Lothian, Scotland, England and men (probably of Scandinavian extraction) from the Western Isles.¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, it appears that unlike Robert de Bruce certain other 'chivalric' warriors had decided to 'go native' and adopt more traditionally minded allies and modes of behaviour.¹⁸¹ Accounts reveal that there was also a significant contingent of traditional Northumbrian warriors in David's army. These included Edgar, the illegitimate son of earl Gospatric of Northumbria, and Robert and Utreð, the sons of Maldred.¹⁸² Richard of Hexham described the activities of these traditional English warriors in some detail remarking that

At that time certain pestilent men, whose whole aim and joy was to plan and perpetrate crimes, combined together in detestable union, the more

¹⁷⁹ "*Normannis, Germanis, Anglis, de Northymbranis et Cumbri, de Teswetadala et Lodonea, de Pictis, qui vulgo Galleweienes dicuntur, et Scottis.*" *DGRS, CRSHR*, vol. iii, p. 152.

¹⁸⁰ *Relatio de Standardo*, pp. 189–191. Similarly John of Worcester notes that David's army was made up of "enemies of many different regions" ("*pluribus diuerse gentis hostibus fere*") McGurk translates this as "many hostile peoples", *CJW*, vol. iii, pp. 236–237. The author of the *Gesta Stephani* remarks that David had assembled from his own people "and from the nearer parts of Scotland... a mass of rebels into an incredible army." ("*Huius igitur gentis rebellem multitudinem a ceterioribus Scotiæ partibus in exercitum inopinabilem adunans...*") *GS*, pp. 54–55.

¹⁸¹ For example, the Galwegians who committed atrocities at Clitheroe were said to be under the command of King David's nephew, William Fitz Duncan. William was the son of David's half brother Duncan II. John of Hexham directly implicates fitz Duncan in the Galwegian slave raiding activities, see *SMOO*, p. 291. See also, Duncan, *Scotland*, p. 219.

¹⁸² Robert and Utreð would appear to have been descendants of the wealthy Anglo-Saxon Northumbrian nobleman, Maldred (son of Crinan and husband of Uchtreð's daughter). Maldred was also the father of earl Gospatric of Northumbria and so these three individuals were probably related. Moreover, Edgar's illegitimate status made him a likely candidate for membership in a traditional warrior fraternity. For the debates over Maldred's possible connections to the Scottish royal family see Aird, *St. Cuthbert*, p. 69, note 41.

effectually to attain the desires of their malevolence... Urged by greed, therefore, and encouraged by impunity, and spurred by madness, they raided through Northumbria like wolves seeking a prey to devour.¹⁸³

Richard's account of this 'unholy' alliance of Anglo-Saxon warriors in a raiding frenzy clearly bears a striking resemblance to the accounts of the Welsh *ynfydyon* extant in the *Brut y Tywysogyon*.¹⁸⁴ Therefore, if one were to remove David's chivalric contingent from the Scottish battle line (which Ælred clearly wished David had done) then it is perhaps possible to view the battle of the Standard "as a ferocious struggle between two opposing cultures." As such it might be regarded as an array of forces from northern and western Britain that adhered, by and large, to the cultural values of traditional warrior society and an opposing army from the south and the continent that represented an alternate set of norms and codes of warfare.¹⁸⁵

The chroniclers' descriptions of the brave 'English' and 'Norman' warriors who faced this formidable army unequivocally depict the battle of the Standard in this manner.¹⁸⁶ Some sense of nascent 'nationhood' and economic superiority certainly contributed to their construction of this prestigious 'other' identity for the English based forces. Yet, its key components were a sense of chivalric unity and shared religious identity. The crusading language employed to describe the English army clearly reveals that this pious self-image was underpinned by the

¹⁸³ "Ea tempestate quidam pestilentes, quibus omne studium et gaudium erat scelera excogitare ac perpetrare, ut malignitatis suae desideria efficacius consummarent detestabili concordia in unum convenerunt... Igitur rapacitate stimulante, et impunitate patrocinante, ac furore exagitante, more luporum queritantes praedam quam devorarent, per Northymbriam discurrerunt." *DGRS, CRSHR*, vol. iii, pp. 166–167, translation from Anderson, *SAEC*, p. 209.

¹⁸⁴ See chapter 2.

¹⁸⁵ Henry of Huntingdon certainly felt that this had been a conflict between the forces of reform and an army of more traditional values. He comments that prior to the battle the English forces were absolved by their priests and then cried out "Amen! Amen!" Meanwhile the Scottish forces issued forth the "warcry of their fathers" (*"Exclamavitque simul; exercitus Scotorum insigne patrum"*), *HA*, pp. 716–717. Barrow has noted that Norse and Gaelic factions within Scotland were forming powerful alliances during this period. He argues that in the north and west there was "...an intensification of the old links with Ireland, a process contrasting sharply with what was happening in the east and lowland Scotland." See Barrow, *Kingship and Unity*, p. 107, this view is supported by Andrew MacDonald, "Rebels", pp. 166–186, 170. See also above.

¹⁸⁶ See Davies, *English Empire*, pp. 127–128 and Gillingham, "Henry and the English", pp. 79–80, "Conquering", pp. 73–75. For a more modified view see Dauvit Broun, "Anglo-French Acculturation and the Irish Element in Scottish Identity" in B. Smith (ed.), *Britain and Ireland 900–1300, Insular Responses to Medieval European Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 135–153, 152, 153.

ideology of reform. This ideology had moulded a revised set of the behavioural norms and warrior values that were in direct opposition to more traditional sensibilities and expressions of power. The reason that the battle of the Standard attracted so much attention from contemporary ecclesiastical commentators was because it was regarded as an integral part of their wider struggle to disseminate these same values throughout the recalcitrant warrior-centred communities of the British Isles. Indeed, the reforming papacy showed a keen intense interest in the outcome of this battle, which is indicated by the prompt arrival on the scene of the papal legate, Alberic, bishop of Ostia. It was this continental bishop, rather than King Stephen's nobles, who dictated the ensuing peace treaty with David I.¹⁸⁷ The detail of this peace agreement (related by Richard of Hexham) are extremely revealing.

Now (the Scots) had long differed from the cisalpine, indeed from almost the universal church... But at this time inspired by divine grace they all with one accord received pope Innocent's commands and his legate (Alberic) with great honour... (Alberic) also summoned king (David) for the re-establishment of peace between him and the king of England; and for the sake of this fell at his feet, entreating him to take pity upon holy church and upon himself and his subjects, to whom he (David) had caused so many and so great evils... This also he obtained of the Galwegians, that they should bring back to Carlisle before the same time limit all captive girls and women whom they might have and restore them to liberty there. (The Galwegians) also, *and all the others*, promised him most faithfully that they would by no means violate churches thenceforth; and that they would spare children and woman-kind, and (men) who were disabled by weakness or age; and that they would thenceforth slay no one unless he opposed them.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ See *DGRS, CRSHR*, vol. iii, pp. 169–171 and *SMOO*, vol. ii, p. 298. See also Duncan, *Scotland*, pp. 220, 260–261.

¹⁸⁸ “*Illi vero diu a Cisalpina, immo fere ab universa ecclesia discordantes... Tunc vero divina gratia inspirati, mandata Innocentii papæ et legatum ejus omnes unanimiter cum magna veneratione susceperunt... Convenit quoque regem de reformanda pace inter eum et regem Angliæ, et hujus rei gratia ad ejus pedes cecidit, scilicet ut sanctæ ecclesiæ et sui ipsius et suorum miseretur, quibus tot et tanta mala fecerat... Hoc etiam apud Pictos impetravit, quod omnes puellas ac mulieres captivas, quas habere possent, ante eundem terminum ad Carlel reducerent, et eas ibi libertati redderent. Ipsi quoque et omnes alii firmissime promiserunt, quod nullo modo ecclesias amplius violarent; et quod parvulis et femineo sexui et ex infirmitate et ætate debilibus parcerent; et omnino neminem nisi sibi resistentem amplius occiderent.*” *DGRS, CRSHR*, vol. iii, pp. 170–171, translation from Anderson (my italics), *SAEC*, pp. 211–212. Given Richard of Hexham's account of Scottish warriors enslaving English women cited earlier (supported by John of Hexham and Henry of Huntingdon) it seems safe to assume that these women were being liberated from slavery.

We may assume that this is a relatively accurate account of the treaty of Durham because Robert Biset, prior of Hexham, was present at the peace council.¹⁸⁹ It is particularly interesting that the treaty stressed the significance of the need to return those English women who had been enslaved. This would suggest that the traditional forces within David's army had been partially successful in their attempt to dishonour their chivalric counterparts through the practice of female abduction. Just as the fictional Ulster warriors of the Irish *Táin Bó Cúailnge* emphasised the recovery of their strength through the liberation of their women, so too, the honour and prowess of the English elite could only be regained when the women under their guardianship had been returned to freedom.¹⁹⁰ The emancipation of these women might also have been regarded as a tactic that would help to limit the sexual sins committed by their captors. Furthermore, the underlying motivations behind the treaty negotiated by Alberic are clear. Both the papacy and the English monarchy wished to impose chivalric and reforming ideals onto the traditional elements within the British societies.¹⁹¹ Whether this could ever be achieved by force alone appears unlikely. The cultural antipathy between the English elite and traditional warriors based in Scotland, Wales, Ireland and the Isles was to continue for much of the twelfth century. William of Newburgh described the actions of William the Lion's Scottish army of 1174 in a, by now, familiar manner.

...and while they sought out their prey it was the delight of that inhuman nation, more savage than wild beasts, to cut the throats of old men, to slaughter little children, to disembowel women and to commit other atrocities of a kind too horrible to mention. So, while this army of monstrous bandits was let loose upon this wretched province and the barbarians were revelling in their inhumanity, the king of Scots, himself

¹⁸⁹ Robert Biset was Richard's predecessor at the priory of Hexham. The author was, therefore, both a friend and colleague of this first hand witness.

¹⁹⁰ See chapter 2.

¹⁹¹ In this respect the treaty may have been partially successful, indeed Aird has commented that Fergus Lord of Galloway responded to the defeat at the Standard by recognising "the value of imitating the socio-cultural values of the opposition, values which had already taken root in the heartlands of the Scots monarchy among the *gens maritime*." See W. Aird, "'Sweet Civility and Barbarous Rudeness': A View from the Frontier. Abbot Ailred of Rievaulx and the Scots" in Steven G. Ellis and Lud'a Klusáková (eds.), *Imagining Frontiers, Contesting Identities* (Pisa: Edizioni Plus, Pisa University Press, 2007) pp. 59–75. For an interesting discussion of pragmatic the adoption of reform sensibilities by more traditional 'Celtic' leaders in the late twelfth century see Smith, "Frontiers", p. 245.

attended and guarded a more honourable and civilised body of soldiery (*honestiori mitiorique stipatus militia*)...¹⁹²

William of Newburgh's account in this instance reveals once again the ambivalence with which the English chroniclers regarded the chivalric monarchs of Scotland. The chronicler clearly felt that William the Lion was a product of his own more 'civilised' cultural milieu. Yet, William of Newburgh also recognised that there was an irreconcilable incompatibility between this 'civilised' Scottish monarch and his more 'barbarous' and traditional subjects. This cultural incompatibility clearly continued to foster deep-seated tensions within Scottish society. These tensions were to resurface, once again, following William the Lion's capture by English forces at Alnwick in 1174. Indeed, William of Newburgh relates that when William's warriors learned of his fate they turned upon the chivalric Englishmen within their own ranks.

So seizing this opportunity, the Scots disclosed their inborn hatred against them (i.e. William's English knights), which they had previously concealed through fear of the King, and slew as many as they lighted upon, while those able to escape took refuge in the royal fortress.¹⁹³

William's description of these events is one of many that illustrate how twelfth-century English perceptions regarding the other populations of British Isles were founded as much upon cultural and behavioural differences as they were upon nascent 'national' identities or political affiliations. This cultural and behavioural differentiation was constructed around the English elite's adoption of the revised norms and sentiments of the ecclesiastical reform movement. Moreover, the vehement condemnations that the English chroniclers directed against the violent slave raiding activities of traditional warriors suggest that their activities were more than just acts of cultural conservatism. They were deliberate and symbolic statements of identity and cultural defi-

¹⁹² "... et dum praeda insisterent, jugulare senes, trucidare parvulos, eviscerare feminas, et hujusmodi, quae horrendum est et dicere, genti inhumanae et feris plus efferae voluptas fuit. Immisso exercitu, barbarisque inhumane debacchantibus, rex ipse, excubante circa se honestiori mitiorique stipatus militia..." *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, lib. ii, *CRSHR*, vol. i, pp. 182–183, translation from *EHD*, vol. ii, pp. 348–349. Ralph de Diceto (d. 1202) also commented that during this raid the Scots led "...away young women captive..." ("...captivas abducere mulierculas..."). *Ymagines Historiarum Radulphi de Diceto Decani Lundoniensis Opera Historica*, vol. i, W. Stubbs (ed.) (London: Longman, 1876), p. 376.

¹⁹³ "Ocasione ergo temporis Scotti innatum, sed metu regio dissimulatum, in illos odium declarantes, quotquot incidebant peremerunt, refugientibus in munitiones regias ceteris qui evadere potuerunt." *Ibid.*, translation from *EHD*, vol. ii, p. 350.

ance against the external values and norms that were infiltrating into their communities.¹⁹⁴

Invasion, Antipathy and Slavery in Twelfth-Century Ireland

Due to its geographical positioning Ireland was somewhat less susceptible to the English cultural infiltration that so dramatically affected both Wales and Scotland during the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. Yet, political and trading contacts had existed between England and Ireland for centuries. The island's maritime links meant that it was by no means an isolated and culturally homogeneous region.¹⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the vibrant Scandinavian settlements on Ireland's coastlines had resulted in a continuing Irish cultural affiliation with the more traditional sensibilities of the Northern world. Ireland had long been a refuge for political exiles and refugees from England and following the Norman Conquest many disaffected Anglo-Saxon warriors appear to have fled to the courts of Irish kings such as Diarmait mac Maél na mBó of Leinster (1047–1072).¹⁹⁶ That many of these traditional English warriors chose to flee North to Scotland and West to Ireland rather than to the Continent is highly indicative of the cultural alignment of these regions.¹⁹⁷ However, during the twelfth century there appears to have been increasing economic, social and cultural contact between Ireland and her more southerly neighbours.¹⁹⁸ William of Malmesbury reveals the increasing influence that the English crown was exerting upon the Irish elite in this period. He reports that when Muirchertach Ó Briain, king of Dublin and Munster (1086–1119), defied Henry I the English king punished him by placing a trade embargo upon Ireland. William notes that following the imposition of this economic blockade the Irish king soon capitulated and from thenceforth he and his successors "...were so devoted to our King Henry that they wrote

¹⁹⁴ This contention is supported by the work of R. Andrew MacDonald who has argued that Somerled, ruler of Argyll, and Fergus of Galloway deliberately affiliated themselves with more traditional Norse-Gaelic culture and made alliances with Irish and Scandinavian rulers in direct opposition to the "new world order" being introduced by the Scottish monarchy during the twelfth century, see "Rebels", pp. 166–186, 170.

¹⁹⁵ Davies, *Domination*, p. 7.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5. Diarmait gave asylum to the sons of Harold Godwineson following 1066 just as he had provided a refuge for their father during his exile in 1051.

¹⁹⁷ In addition, this reflects contemporary political alignments.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

nothing except what would please him and did nothing except what he told them.”¹⁹⁹

An increasing political and cultural affiliation between the English and Irish elites is also illustrated by the actions of Diarmait Mac Murchada, king of Leinster (1132–66, 1170–71). In 1166 Tigernán Ua Ruairc, prince of Bréifne, and Diarmait Ua Máel Sechlainn of Meath expelled Diarmait from his kingdom. Yet, rather than choosing a Norse, Scottish or Welsh ally Diarmait looked to Henry II and Richard fitz Gilbert, earl of Pembroke for support.²⁰⁰ Diarmait’s alliance with Fitz Gilbert was to have far reaching implications as it heralded an era of English invasion and settlement in Ireland. We have already seen that this resulted in expressions of cultural antipathy on both sides. Indeed, of all the twelfth-century English condemnations regarding the ‘barbaric’ mores of their ‘Celtic’ neighbours those directed against the Irish population would appear to have been the most venomous. This, in turn, suggests that the English elite who settled in Ireland experienced a more acute sense of cultural and behavioural differentiation than had their counterparts who settled in Wales or Scotland. This may in part be due to the physical separateness of Ireland and also to the comparatively low level of cultural interaction between the two populations prior to 1169.²⁰¹ Nevertheless, it was the Irish population’s failure to adopt the norms of the reform movement (together with the closely associated revised codes in warfare and values of chivalry) that was by far the most important factor in the construction of this sense of cultural difference.

By the twelfth century many individuals within the Irish Church had readily embraced the revised norms and codes of conduct expounded by the continental reform movement.²⁰² Reforming synods were held

¹⁹⁹ “...ita deuotos habuit noster Henricus ut nichil nisi quod eum palparet scriberent...”, *GRA*, pp. 738–739.

²⁰⁰ F.X. Martin has noted that Diarmait had been a vigorous supporter of the reform movement and he established a Cistercian abbey at Baltinglass, County Wicklow in 1148. Yet, despite his strong English connections it appears that Diarmait had continued to express his power through traditional practices. Indeed, the antipathy between Diarmait and his chief protagonist Tigernán Ua Ruairc had, in part, been stimulated by Diarmait’s abduction of Tigernán’s wife, Derbforgaill, in 1152, see “Diarmait”, pp. 49–50. In addition, Diarmait had ordered that Mór, the Abbess at Cell Dara, be abducted and raped shortly after his accession in 1132, see chapter 3.

²⁰¹ This may also be due to the nature and attitudes of contemporary commentators such as Gerald of Wales.

²⁰² Smith, “Frontiers”, p. 251 and Brett, “Canterbury’s perspective”, pp. 13–35.

and prelates from Ireland travelled to France and Italy and studied at the prominent reform schools of learning.²⁰³ However, the extreme significance of traditional warrior norms and expressions of patriarchal power in Ireland meant that Irish ecclesiastics found it extremely difficult to impose their revised codes of behaviour onto their secular elite. We have already seen that Archbishop Lanfranc of Canterbury had complained about the polygamous behaviour of Irish kings in 1073–1074.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, the late twelfth-century accounts of Gerald of Wales and Bernard of Clairvaux suggest that the Church's attempts to impose its strict codes concerning monogamy, exogamy and legitimacy upon the Irish population had been largely unsuccessful.²⁰⁵ The Irish ecclesiastics' failure in modifying such traditional behaviour prompted Gerald to complain that

...they are too slack and negligent in the correction of a people that is guilty of such enormities. Because of their not preaching to and reproving their people, I preach that they should be reprov'd themselves.²⁰⁶

Yet, Gerald's attitude towards his Irish counterparts may have been unnecessarily harsh. Expressions of warrior power through virility and violence were of fundamental social importance in Irish society. Any attempt to modify these expressions and alter traditional behavioural norms would have undoubtedly been met with entrenched opposition.²⁰⁷ As we have already seen the Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical hierarchy achieved little or no success when faced with a very similar challenge despite the best efforts of powerful individuals like Archbishop Wulfstan of York.²⁰⁸

The papacy clearly felt that the Irish population's recalcitrance in the face of reform warranted external intervention. Pope Adrian IV's

²⁰³ Davies, *Domination*, pp. 16–18.

²⁰⁴ See above.

²⁰⁵ See notes 36 and 53, above. See also J. Gillingham, "The Beginnings of English Imperialism", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 5, 1992, pp. 392–409, 403–405 and "Foundations", pp. 61–62. See also Davies, *English Empire*, pp. 129–130.

²⁰⁶ "In episcopis vero et praelatis hoc fere solum reprehensione dignum invenio, quod in populi tam enormiter delinquentis correctione desides nimis sunt et negligentes. Quod igitur nec predicant nec corripunt, hinc ipsos predico corripiendos; quod non arguunt, hinc argu; quod reprehendere negligunt, hinc reprehendo" *TH/EH*, pp. 173–174, translation from O'Meara, *HTI*, pp. 112–113. Paradoxically, Gerald praised the Irish clergy for their adherence to the ascetic lifestyle, which suggests that reform norms were firmly established within the ecclesiastical population of Ireland, *ibid.*, p. 172.

²⁰⁷ Just as they had been in pre-Conquest England, see chapter 4.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

Laudabiliter of 1159 must, therefore, be viewed in a similar context to Archbishop Thurstan's absolution of English troops prior to the battle of the Standard.²⁰⁹ The Irish ecclesiastical hierarchy certainly welcomed Henry's arrival in 1171. Indeed, they gladly received this new and powerful ally in their struggle to impose reform upon the secular population of Ireland.²¹⁰ Moreover, Henry's invasion of Ireland appears to have been regarded by the English ecclesiastical chroniclers as a further victory in their continuing struggle to impose a uniform international Christian code of ethics upon their neighbouring communities. The English elite almost certainly shared the attitudes of their chroniclers who regarded slave-raiding/trading activities to be synonymous with sexual sin, immorality and 'barbarous' behaviour. They were undoubtedly aware that the continuing existence of the slave markets in Ireland, and in particularly Dublin, were perpetuating the trade in slaves. In addition, they recognised that these markets were being supplied with English, Norman and Flemish victims from Northumbria, Cumbria, South Wales and the Welsh Marches. The intense desire to impose reform norms upon the Irish population was, therefore, supplemented by a desire to extinguish the Irish Sea slave trade. This was made clear in Gerald of Wales's account of the Council of Armagh in 1170 when the English conquest of Ireland was said to have been justified

...because of the sins of their own people, and in particular because it had formerly been their habit to purchase Englishmen indiscriminately from merchants as well as from robbers and pirates, and to make slaves of them, this disaster had befallen them by the stern judgement of the divine vengeance, to the end that they in turn should now be enslaved by that same race. For the English, in the days when the government of England remained fully in their hands, used to put their children up for sale—a vicious piracy in which the whole race had a part—and would sell their own sons and relations into Ireland rather than endure any want or hunger. So there are good grounds for believing that, just as formerly those who sold slaves, so now also those who bought them, have, by committing such a monstrous crime, deserved the yoke of slavery. The aforesaid council therefore decided that throughout the island

²⁰⁹ See above.

²¹⁰ This appears to be borne out by first decree enacted by the Synod of Cashel in 1172 which ordered "...*quod universi fideles per Hiberniam constituti, repudiato cognatarum et affinium contubernio, legitima contrahant matrimonia et observent.*" ("...that all the faithful throughout Ireland should repudiate cohabitation between those related by kinship or marriage, and should enter into and abide by lawful marriage contracts.") *EH*, pp. 98–99. See also Davies, *Domination*, p. 17 and Smith, "Frontiers", p. 251.

Englishmen should be freed from the bonds of slavery and restored to their former freedom.²¹¹

This is a particularly fascinating tract as it illustrates how the dynamics of English cultural antipathy towards slave raiding activity was intimately entwined with the objectives of the reform movement. Gerald's account reveals that the Council of Armagh's settlement was extremely similar in objectives and tone to the peace treaty enacted by Alberic, bishop of Ostia following the battle of the Standard. It implies that because Anglo-Saxon society had participated in the sin of slave trading/raiding, it had been conquered by the Normans and then integrated into the 'civilised' and religiously uniform sphere of continental Europe. By the same token, Irish society had now been punished by conquest for its participation in these illicit practices and should now be similarly integrated. The Council's statement constituted an enforced prohibition against such unchivalric activities in Ireland and demanded the emancipation of all those Englishmen who had been alienated from their origins through enslavement. The motivations for such measures were inextricably bound up with the ideology of the reform movement and this was made clear at the subsequent Synod of Cashel in 1172. This Synod proclaimed that

...it is right and just that, as by divine providence Ireland has received her lord and king from England, she should also submit to a reformation from the same source. Indeed, both the realm and the church of Ireland are indebted to this mighty king for whatever they enjoy of the blessings of peace and the growth of religion; as before his coming to Ireland, all sorts of wickedness had prevailed among this people for a long series of years, which now, by his authority and careful administration are abolished.²¹²

²¹¹ "...propter peccata scilicet populi sui, eoque precipue quod Anglos olim tam a mercatoribus quam predonibus atque piratis emere passim ei in servitutem redigere consueverant, divine censura vindicte hoc eis incommodum accidisse, ut et ipsi quoque ab eadem gente in servitutem vice reciproca iam redigantur. Anglorum namque populus, adhuc integro eorundem regno, communi gentis vicio liberos suos venales exponere, et priusquam inopiam ullam aut inedium sustinerent, filios proprios et cognatos in Hiberniam vendere consueverant. Unde et probabiliter credi potest, sicut venditores dim ita et emptores tam enormi delicto iuga servitutis iam meruisse. Decretum est itaque predicto concili, et cum universitatis assensu publice statutum, ut Angli ubique per insulam servitutis vinculo mancipati in pristinam reocentur libertatem." *EH*, pp. 69–71. Gerald provides the only account of this Council.

²¹² "Itaque omnia divina, ad inster sacrosancte ecclesie, iuxta quod Anglicana observat ecclesia, in omnibus partibus ecclesie amodo tractentur. Dignum etenim et iustissimum est ut, sicut dominum et regem ex Anglia sortita divinitus est Hibernia, sic etiam exinde vivendi formam accipiat meliorem. Ipsi namque regi magnifico tam ecclesia quam regnum Hibernie debent quicquid de bono pacis et incremento religionis hactenus est assecuta. Nam ante ipsius adventum in Hiberniam, multimoda malorum genera

The rich Irish commercial centres, such as Dublin, appear to have been the primary targets of Henry II who quickly stamped his authority upon Richard fitz Gilbert's enterprise and reserved control of these centres for the English crown.²¹³ The reasons for Henry's interest in these commercially vibrant settlements have, therefore, appeared all too obvious to modern historians writing from politically specific and economically based perspectives. Duffy has noted that the over-lordship of Dublin gave Henry full claim to the high kingship of Ireland, and Ó Cróinín argues that the king's real purpose was to assert his authority over the territories that had been conquered by his vassals.²¹⁴ Wallace has argued that the incredible wealth generated by the port of Dublin acted as a magnet for royal intervention.²¹⁵ Such considerations undoubtedly motivated Henry II in his actions. However, the emotive forces of cultural antipathy should not be underestimated. Henry wished to gain control over the lucrative Irish marketplace of Dublin yet he must also have been acutely aware that the wealth of this city had been primarily founded upon the Irish Sea slave trade. In spite of the immense profits that this trade had generated Henry appears to have followed the advice of his ecclesiastical advisers and placed a prohibition upon slave trading there. Like his predecessor William the Conqueror, then, Henry clearly felt that his chivalric and pious image as a supporter of reform was far more valuable than any economic gain that could be made from allowing this trade to continue. His prohibition of slave trading was further facilitated by the slaying and/or evacuation of many key figures within the Hiberno-Norse community of Dublin, a situation supplemented by a subsequent influx of English settlers from

a multis retro temporibus ibidem emeruerant, que ipsius potencia et munere in desuetudinem abiire." *EH*, p. 100, translation from *IHD 1172–1922*, p. 19. Again, Gerald is our only source for this document. Scott and Martin translate the first sentence as "...it is proper and most fitting that, just as by God's grace Ireland has received her lord and king from England, so too should she receive a better pattern of living from that quarter." I have, therefore, chosen to use Curtis and McDowell's translation, which correctly highlights the reform minded sentiments behind the decrees of the document. Moreover, the "*multimoda malorum*" that were of primary concern to the reforming hierarchy appear to have been the practice of illicit marriage and concubinage.

²¹³ S. Duffy, "Ireland's Hastings: The Anglo-Norman Conquest of Dublin", *ANS*, xx, 1998, pp. 69–87, 80.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 80–85 and Ó Cróinín, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 288.

²¹⁵ Wallace, "Archaeology", p. 159. Duffy agrees with Wallace and remarks that Henry wasted no time in establishing his authority over the merchants of the city, see "Ireland's Hastings", pp. 80–82, 85.

Bristol and elsewhere.²¹⁶ By 1283 only 40 Ostmen of relatively low status remained in the cantreds of the kingdom of Dublin.²¹⁷ Moreover, Henry and his leading churchmen clearly recognised that by assuming control of Dublin and the other Hiberno-Norse towns they could deny disruptive warrior factions within the British Isles access to their traditional refuges, bases of operations and slave market places.

The Irish and Hiberno-Norse were fully aware of the cultural and political ramifications of the English conquest of Dublin and the city was not relinquished without a struggle. In 1171 a huge Irish-Scandinavian fleet of 160 ships assaulted the city but was heavily defeated.²¹⁸ Following this Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair of Connacht, the high king of Ireland, besieged the city for two months with a hosting of men from all over Ireland, but was finally tricked by an English counter attack into a humiliating defeat.²¹⁹ Interestingly, Ruaidrí's forces, like king David's army at the Battle of the Standard, included a conglomerate of traditional warriors. Amongst the Irish contingents there was Tigernán Ua Ruairc, prince of Bréifne and Murchad Ua Cerbaill, king of Airgialla along with Mac Duinn Shléibe, king of Ulaid, king Domnall Ua Briain of Thomond, Murchad Mac Murchada, king of Uí Chennselaig and a huge fleet made up of Norsemen from the Isle of Man and the earldom of Orkney.²²⁰ The unprecedented nature of this gathering suggests that these warriors were all too aware of the implications of this chivalric intrusion into their society and culture; their fears would appear to have been justified. When Henry II assumed political control over his Irish dominions in 1172 he asserted English supremacy through his support for the key objectives of the reform movement in Ireland.²²¹ By adopting this reforming stance Henry was following a tried and tested English royal strategy that had initially been instigated by William I. This royal adoption of reforming values was, at times, used as a cynical pretext for territorial, political or economic expansionism. Nevertheless, it clearly provided rulers like Henry II with

²¹⁶ Duffy, "Ireland's Hastings", p. 85. For a full discussion of this process see E. Purcell, "The Expulsion of the Ostmen, 1169–1171: The Documentary Evidence", *Peritia*, 17–18, 2004, pp. 276–294.

²¹⁷ J. Bradley, "The Interpretation of Scandinavian Settlement in Ireland" in *Settlement and Society*, pp. 48–78, 62.

²¹⁸ Duffy, "Ireland's Hastings", p. 79.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 79–80.

²²⁰ *EH*, note 115, p. 306.

²²¹ See notes 211 and 212, above.

a powerful ideological justification for their actions. In the eyes of the contemporary English elite and their chroniclers Henry had struck a further blow against the sinful forces of the traditional warrior order in Britain.

The English imperial expansionism into Ireland during the second half of the twelfth century was to trigger centuries of cultural antipathy between traditional elements within Irish society and their chivalric counterparts. Indeed, Henry II's newly acquired role as the champion of the Irish Church appears to have denied the native laity of much of their authority. One consequence of this appears to have been a significant revival in secular paganism during the early years of the thirteenth century.²²² This pagan revival was focussed around the birth of the prophesised warrior-king, Aodh Eanghach, who, it was foretold, would rid Ireland of her invaders and whose fertility was said to be intimately connected with the soil of Ireland.²²³ The pagan cult of Aodh appears to have dissipated following the arrival of the Dominican and Franciscan friars in the mid-thirteenth century.²²⁴ Yet, its existence provides evidence of the power and potency of pre-Christian value systems in Ireland. Moreover, the violent ravages of traditional style warrior fraternities were to plague Irish society for many centuries.²²⁵ It appears that the disruptive and dangerous lifestyle of these groups also attracted certain English settlers. As late as 1297 the Anglo-Irish parliament complained that certain degenerate Englishmen had taken to wearing *fian* style hairstyles and assuming a life of brigandage.²²⁶ In addition, English warriors were not averse to adopting traditional strategies of warfare. The *Annals of Connacht* relate that in 1236 a host of the *Goill Erenn* (the foreigners or English settlers) were searching for

²²² K. Simms, *From Kings to Warlords* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1987), pp. 15–16, 26–28 and K. Simms, “Gaelic warfare in the Middle Ages” in T. Bartlett and K. Jeffrey (eds.), *A Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 99–115, 104–106 and M. Mhaonaigh, “Pagans and Holy Men: Literary Manifestations of Twelfth Century Reform” in Bracken and Ó Riain-Raedel, *Ireland and Europe*, pp. 143–161, 154.

²²³ Simms, *Kings to Warlords*, p. 27.

²²⁴ Ibid., p. 15, and Simms, “Gaelic Warfare”, p. 106 and J. Watt, *The Church in Medieval Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1972), pp. 76–77.

²²⁵ Simms, “Gaelic Warfare”, pp. 101–102, 104–106.

²²⁶ *Statutes and Ordinances, and Acts of Parliament of Ireland, King John to Henry V*, H.F. Berry (ed.) (Dublin: HMSO, 1907), vol. i, pp. 210–211. See also Simms, “Gaelic Warfare”, p. 101.

an outlawed Irish nobleman named Fedlim mac Cathail Chrobdeirg. When Fedlim eluded them they chose instead to raid the locality and "...captured many noble women and carried them off into captivity and bondage."²²⁷ Their English mainland contemporaries would have undoubtedly regarded such behaviour as a sign that these colonists had been polluted by their 'barbarous' social surroundings.²²⁸ Indeed, Gerald of Wales warned of the dangers that faced the English settlers living in Ireland because

...he who touches pitch will be defiled by it; that foreigners coming to this country (i.e. Ireland) almost inevitably are contaminated by this (treachery), as it were, inborn vice of the country—a vice that is most contagious.²²⁹

Yet, in spite of the activities of the thirteenth-century *Goill Erenn* it appears that English hegemony over Dublin effectively removed the nerve centre of the slave supply network and eventually brought large-scale slave raiding and trading in the British Isles to an end. The demise of this trade in the 'Celtic' regions can, therefore, be viewed as militaristic enforcement of chivalric values and reforming norms. The removal of slave markets and traders, however, did not end smaller scale raiding activities or bring a halt to the cultural antipathy between the English elite and more traditional elements within the communities of the British Isles. Nevertheless, the increasing prestige attributed to the ideals of the reform movement and the accompanying revised warrior norms were to have a profound impact upon the traditional systems of patriarchy within these British societies. The powerful expansion of English cultural and political influence during the twelfth century acted as a catalyst for the dissemination and adoption of reform values throughout the British Isles. As these revised norms came to be adopted by the neighbouring elites their behavioural conduct especially in warfare became radically modified. In particular, the practice of slave raiding that had once been a power affirming symbol of cultural

²²⁷ "...7 cur gabatur moran do mnaib maithi ann sin 7 co rucsat leo iat a mbroitt 7 i ndairi..." *Annála Connacht, The Annals of Connacht*, A. Martin Freeman (ed. and trans.) (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1944), pp. 58–61.

²²⁸ See Davies *English Empire*, pp. 136–140 and Gillingham, "Invasion of Ireland", pp. 28–29.

²²⁹ "...et qui picem tangit coinquinabitur ab ea...adeo inquam, bonus mores corrumpunt colloquia prava, ut hoc vitio patrie tanquam innato et contagiosissimo etiam alienigenae huc advecti fere inevitabiliter involvantur." *TH/EH*, p. 168 translation from O'Meara, *HTI*, p. 109.

identity came to be regarded as an uncivilised activity associated with lascivious behaviour and immorality. By the thirteenth century the secular elite within the British societies had, generally, come to regard slave raiding and trading activities to be illicit exercises associated with common brigandage and thievery rather than with power, masculinity and warrior prowess.

CONCLUSION

THE ENDURING LEGACY OF MEDIEVAL SLAVERY

Slavery was an institution that was of immense cultural significance to the societies of early medieval Britain. It was essential for defining both social hierarchy and community identity. Its existence reinforced traditional patriarchal order and contributed towards cultural constructions of power and gender. Only a fundamental shift in attitudes and norms could have diminished its social significance. Such a shift clearly occurred during the late-eleventh and twelfth centuries. By the end of the twelfth century the reform movement had instigated a reconfiguration of traditional patriarchal systems within the societies of England, Scotland and Wales. A similar reconfiguration was to occur within many Irish communities during the thirteenth century.¹ Yet, the veneer of the reform ideology was extremely thin and traditional behavioural traits were never far from the surface. During periods of ethnic tension or when centralised authority broke down problems of youthful lawlessness, sexual violence and anti-clericalism would quickly resurface. Moreover, traditional practices of female accumulation and resource polygyny were never abandoned by the secular elite, although, they were continued in a more discreet and covert manner. In England and Scotland the ascendancy of the reformers' ideals concerning monogamy and legitimacy limited the disruption caused by such sexual incontinence. However, internecine violence and political fragmentation continued to plague the societies of Ireland and Wales. We have already seen that whilst this was the case then the resurgence of slave raiding activity was always a possibility.² Furthermore, it must be recognised that the twelfth-century ecclesiastical reformers did not strive to eradicate the institution of slavery from the shores of Britain, indeed this had never been one of their objectives. They certainly regarded slave raiding and trading to be barbarous and immoral enterprises associated with sinfulness. Nevertheless, they continued to view slavery as an indispensable institution that was essential for maintaining social order.

¹ See chapter 5.

² Ibid.

Without slavery how could sin be punished? How could disorder be suppressed and hierarchy reinforced? Such attitudes are clearly evident from the judgement of the Council of Westminster in 1127 that readily condoned the enslavement of clerical concubines for their sexual impropriety.³ This significant judgement also reveals that the forces of reform had radically intensified more traditional associations between feminine sexuality, moral corruption and powerlessness. This ancient association between slavery, femininity and sexual accessibility appears to have remained undiminished within the cultures of Western Europe throughout the Middle Ages.

There has been a consensus of opinion amongst modern historians that slavery disappeared from Western Europe during the eleventh and twelfth centuries primarily as a result of the growth of the market economy during this period.⁴ Indeed, there have been very few dissenters from this line of argument that appears to reinforce modern Western sensibilities regarding notions of freedom, the rise of capitalism and the development of European civilisation generally. Yet, if slavery did disappear from Western Europe during the medieval era then this would make the societies within that region and time frame extremely exceptional ones.⁵ Indeed, more exceptional than the modern economically sophisticated Western European societies in which slavery stubbornly persists despite the fact that it has been universally outlawed and is considered morally reprehensible.⁶ There have, of course, been a number of academics who have voiced concerns that the medieval records do not support such an optimistic view of the medieval past. Taylor has recently argued that an absence of evidence for slaves does not necessarily constitute an absence of slaves in any given society.⁷ Even Marc Bloch, whose work shaped modern arguments for the disappearance of slavery through economic expediency, commented

³ See chapter 4.

⁴ Wyatt, "Significance", pp. 332–335.

⁵ Taylor has argued that "there are good reasons for supposing slavery to have been a major structural feature of the majority of human social formations at least since the advent of farming...it is not clear to me whether any society has yet been free of the phenomenon *de facto*" Taylor, "Ambushed by a Grotesque", pp. 225, 232.

⁶ Philips, "Slavery as a Human Institution", p. 25.

⁷ "In a daily newspaper there is very little that informs readers that water and electricity are being constantly delivered. Only if there is a problem is something recorded. Thus in accounts of society where slave labour is assumed, we rarely hear of slaves—for the most part, they are simply too obvious and too uninteresting" Taylor, "Ambushed by a Grotesque", pp. 228–229.

that the “profound essence” of slavery would not have been easily eradicated.⁸ During the 1950s Iris Origo noted that the slave trade had continued to flourish in the economically vibrant Mediterranean states of the high Middle Ages.⁹ Similarly, during the 1980s, Karras’s study of medieval Scandinavian society revealed that slavery continued to be an important institution in Sweden until the beginning of the fourteenth century.¹⁰ One of the most interesting of these dissenting arguments, however, has been Susan Mosher Stuard’s study “Ancillary Evidence for the Decline of Medieval Slavery.” In this article Stuard argues that if we shift our analytical perspective from the male to the female slave then we discover that the medieval traffic in women did not diminish.¹¹ Given what we have discovered concerning medieval expressions of patriarchal power and virility then this should be less than surprising. Stuard also comments that

...it may well be that demise arguments, wherever applied, are perverse even at their best: like the rising middle class, which took centuries to make its ascent, the purported demise of slavery in Europe took many centuries to reach completion.¹²

I would take Stuard’s argument a step further. If we recognise the institution’s intimate association with sexual exploitation and expressions of power/masculinity then we will also notice that there has been a disturbing continuity in the existence of slavery from the medieval period and into the modern era.

There is evidence to suggest that female slaves continued to be used as concubines and mistresses by clerical and secular masters throughout the medieval period.¹³ Yet, as we have seen such relationships were increasingly frowned upon by the reform-minded ecclesiastical authorities. Indeed, the canon law texts of the Middle Ages reveal that the moral dangers posed by lascivious liaisons between clerics and their *ancillae* was a major concern for these authorities.¹⁴ Yet, this ecclesiastical

⁸ Bloch, *Slavery and Serfdom*, pp. 33–92.

⁹ I. Origo, “Domestic Enemy”, pp. 321–366. See also S.M. Stuard, “Slavery in Medieval Ragusa”, pp. 155–172.

¹⁰ Karras, *Slavery and Society*, pp. 138–140.

¹¹ Stuard, “Ancillary”, pp. 3–28.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11, see also Goodich, “*Ancilla Dei*”, pp. 120–123.

¹⁴ J. Gilchrist, “The Medieval Canon Law on Unfree Persons: Gratian and the Decretist Doctrines c. 1141–1234”, *Studia Gratiana*, 19, 1976, pp. 277–293 and Stuard, “Ancillary”, p. 11.

antipathy towards such relationships was not motivated by concerns regarding the well being of servile women. It was motivated by deeply felt anxieties regarding the damaging potential for their male masters' moral corruption. The ecclesiastical authorities recognised that the unrestrained power exercised by the master in such relationships presented a constant temptation for sexual sin. As a result they made attempts to regulate such unions. For example, *Causa* 15 of Gratian's *Decretum* ruled that ecclesiastics of any rank who produced offspring with their *ancilla* should be punished with canonical censure.¹⁵ The ecclesiastical authorities' eventual recognition of slave unions was clearly intended to limit sexual relations between the master and his slave within secular society generally.¹⁶ One result of the ecclesiastical disapproval of traditional resource polygyny may have been that slave masters attempted to disguise the nature and extent of the power that they exerted over their female dependants. The increasing employment of a bewildering number of terms used to refer to female slaves provides some indication that this might have been the case.¹⁷ A plethora of labels such as *servientes* ('those serving'), *ad standum* (literally 'those who wait on me'), *puellae* (literally 'girls', although meant in a pejorative and servile sense) and *famulae* ('female servants/domestics') might be used in reference to female slaves during the high Middle Ages.¹⁸ These different terms may have been intentionally employed to obscure the legal status of female slaves from the gaze of disapproving ecclesiastical eyes.¹⁹ Yet, in spite of this deliberate semantic scrambling the increased use of the terms such as *famula* rather than *ancilla* does not appear to denote any tangible improvement in the status of these servile women.²⁰ This attempt to disguise the true nature of the dependence inherent in the master/slave relationship probably did not go unnoticed by the ecclesiastical authorities. Indeed, the courtesy books of the high Middle Ages frequently

¹⁵ *Causa* 15 of Gratian's *Decretum* also proclaimed that the offspring of such an illicit union should become the property of the Church see, *Decretum Gratiani*, J.P. Migne (ed.), *PL*, 187 (Paris: Migne, 1855), pt. ii, *Causa* 15, *Questio* 8, c. 3, p. 988. See also Stuard, "Ancillary", p. 11 and Brundage, *LSCS*, p. 230.

¹⁶ See chapter 4.

¹⁷ Stuard, "Ancillary", p. 9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9. For a modern parallel see Taylor, "Ambushed by a Grotesque", pp. 228–229.

²⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 9–10.

warned about the damage that could be done to a noble household's honour if too many female servants were maintained.²¹

As we have already seen the reformers' concerns regarding the corrupting nature of the master/slave relationship dramatically reduced the prestigious nature of female slave holding (and slave holding generally) during the twelfth century. It is interesting to note that this diminution in significance of slavery coincided remarkably with the growth of prostitution during the same period. This rise in the phenomenon of prostitution has frequently been associated with economic growth, rural migration and increasing urbanisation.²² Nevertheless, it may also have had a significant cultural dimension. Indeed, control over prostitution appears to have replaced more traditional patriarchal systems of sexual access and reward.

The ascetic ideals of the ecclesiastical reform movement created a pervasive psychological association between feminine sexuality and the forces of evil.²³ As a consequence the Church sought to regulate and control feminine sexuality whenever and wherever it could. One way in which the Church asserted this control was through the supervision and manipulation of prostitution. It appears that during the central Middle Ages the English Church used the regulation of prostitution as a means to reinforce patriarchal control over all women.²⁴ In medieval canon law prostitution was not defined by its commercial facet but, rather, by the untamed and dangerous nature of feminine sexual promiscuity.²⁵ In spite of this the ecclesiastical authorities tolerated such women because they were thought to perform an important social function: they provided an outlet for the disruptive sexual energies of unmarried men. Control over sexual access, therefore, remained an intrinsically important factor in systems of patriarchal power. The large numbers of youthful single men in urban areas were regarded

²¹ R.M. Karras, *Common Women, Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 54. It should be no surprise that Karras' work on slavery led her into an examination of medieval sexual exploitation.

²² L.L. Otis, *Prostitution in Medieval Society* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 15–24, see also Barber, *The Two Cities*, p. 56.

²³ R.M. Karras, "Holy Harlots: Prostitute Saints in Medieval Legend", *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol i (1990–1991), pp. 3–32.

²⁴ R.M. Karras, "Sex, Money and Prostitution in Medieval English Culture" in J. Murray and K. Eisenbichler (eds.), *Sex and Sexuality in the Premodern West* (Toronto/Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 201–217, see also Karras, "Regulation", pp. 126–127 and Otis, *Prostitution*, pp. 102–103.

²⁵ Karras, "Sex, Money", p. 201.

as a serious threat to the female dependents of powerful individuals.²⁶ Prostitution provided a safety valve that regulated the potentially disruptive nature of these male groups and helped to preserve social order.²⁷ The ecclesiastical authorities of the high middle ages therefore regulated access to brothels in a manner which was, in some ways, analogous to the strategies through which their early medieval secular counterparts had controlled sexual access to their female slaves.²⁸ In spite of the Church's strict codes prohibiting excessive sexual activity it appears that ecclesiastics were able to rationalise this tolerant attitude towards prostitutes because such women were not regarded to be the property of any single individual. A prostitute's legal status meant that she was unable to refuse sexual access to any man who approached her. One consequence of this was that women who sold sex for money came to be generally regarded as the property of the community.²⁹ The communal nature of the prostitute, therefore, reduced the moral impact of her actions in the eyes of reform-minded ecclesiastics. The potential for sexual temptation provided by female slaves was considered to be far more corrupting because of the powerful and intimate nature of the master/slave relationship.³⁰

Nevertheless, the sexual exploitation of female slaves certainly continued within the households of the powerful. The continuing use of female slaves as domestics thereby allowed conceptions of slavery to endure into the early modern period.³¹ Furthermore, the growth in the institution of prostitution across Europe in no way negated the phenomenon of female enslavement. It appears that the abduction of young servant girls for sale as slaves into the sex trade became a distinct problem for the authorities of London during the sixteenth century. Judicial records from 1525–1550 reveal that an individual named Robert Cliff was charged with common bawdry because he had

²⁶ Karras, *Common Women*, p. 134, Otis, *Prostitution*, pp. 102–103, Rossiaud, "Prostitution, Youth", pp. 25–29.

²⁷ For a striking fifteenth century parallel from Dijon, South East France see Rossiaud, "Prostitution, Youth", vol. iv, pp. 1–46.

²⁸ Karras, *Common Women*, pp. 134–135.

²⁹ Ibid., see also Otis, *Prostitution*, p. 103 and Karras, "Sex, Money", p. 208.

³⁰ Karras, "Sex, Money", p. 208. Single men who did not frequent the town brothels might be suspected of much the greater sins of adultery or maintaining an illicit concubine, see Rossiaud, "Prostitution, Youth", p. 23.

³¹ Stuard, "Ancillary", p. 4.

...sold Agnes Smith, a young girl and that time servant to the said Robert, to Lombards for forty pounds.³²

Similarly, Richard Peryn and his wife were accused of abducting a young girl who had been in the service of a man named Thomas Harlow.

Shrewdly, with enticing words, they removed and took her from his service and led her to their house...and there shut her, against her will and crying out in a room, and conveyed and sold her to a certain George Galliman (presumably Galleyman or Italian merchant) and others to deflower and to use shamefully.³³

The lucrative nature of this trade is illustrated by the fact that many of the merchants who were purchasing these English slaves originated from the most vibrant areas of economic growth in Europe.³⁴ Although, the English authorities of the time regarded slave taking and slave trading to be both illegal and immoral the practice seems to have proved extremely difficult to eradicate, just as it is today. It should be no surprise that sexual exploitation remained a prominent feature of this trade throughout the early-modern era and into the industrialised age. Indeed, despite the abolition of slavery in Britain and its Empire in 1833, young women continued to be sold into prostitution in the United Kingdom throughout the nineteenth century.³⁵ The growth in this illicit trade was nurtured by extensive rural/urban migration and the social dislocation caused by the great economic revolution of that period.³⁶ Moreover, technological advances in transport and communications facilitated intercontinental contacts between slave traders and opened up new markets and horizons for their unpleasant enterprise.³⁷

³² 'Letter Book K', *CLBL*, folio 11v, p. 17. See also Karras, *Common Women*, pp. 60–61.

³³ "Letter Book K", *CLBL*, folio 169r, p. 216. For various other examples of young female servants being sold into sexual slavery in England during the sixteenth century see Karras, *Common Women*, pp. 60–64. There is a remarkable similarity between this sixteenth-century account and the complaints made by Archbishop Wulfstan II of York against similar activities at the beginning of the eleventh century, see chapter 4.

³⁴ I.e. the Mediterranean city states.

³⁵ S. Altink, *Stolen Lives, Trading Women into Sex and Slavery* (London: Scarlet Press, 1995), pp. 13–15. Altink notes that the Victorian feminist Josephine Butler (1828–1906) was an early activist in the campaign against trafficking women. Butler was convinced that the state was condoning forced prostitution as a means to preserve order and reduce male sexual violence, *ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Many historians have chosen, either consciously or unconsciously, to sweep such unsavoury social undercurrents belying the progress of Western 'civilisation' under the historiographical carpet. There has been a distinct tendency amongst both historians and archaeologists to de-emphasize or ignore such practices.³⁸

Yet, it is extremely important that we acknowledge and do not shy away from attempting to understand the enduring significance of human trafficking for it provides us with a valuable insight into the human condition.

³⁸ "...owning and exchanging women is not seen as relevant to an understanding of slavery because such persons do not constitute an economic class within a stratified society and because whatever services or labour which they are required to perform are 'unspecialized'. It is as if the variety of exploitation (enforced drudgery punctuated by rape, for example) can somehow make servitude more palatable." See Taylor, "Ambushed by a Grotesque", p. 228.

EPILOGUE

The rise of the global economy during the dying years of the twentieth century has coincided with a disturbing increase in female trafficking and slave trading in general. The economic and social dislocation this has caused has motivated Third and Second World peoples to migrate to the First World.¹ These economic migrants have provided a numerous and vulnerable resource upon which human traffickers have continued to prey. One particularly prevalent activity of these traffickers has been the enslavement of illegal female migrants for use in the sex trade of Western Europe.² Mafia-style gangs of violent young men operating on the margins of society predominantly undertake this traffic. These gangs, who skilfully exploit the political vacuum at the centre of the migration issue, frequently employ rape as a means to instil the 'shame-humiliation affect' facilitating the subjugation of their victims.³ Furthermore, in addition to sexual forms of slavery in Western Europe, child slaves and indentured labour forces are being employed by disreputable manufacturers in Third World countries to supply the demands of the global market place.⁴ Such activities are frequently glossed over or ignored by the governments of these nations. Indeed, the governments of developing countries are often unwilling to acknowledge or indeed tackle the problem of slavery because the institution is still associated with barbarism and economic stagnation. This powerful

¹ Ibid., p. 4. See also K. Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery* (New York/London: New York University Press, 1979), J. Bindman, "An International Perspective on Slavery in the Sex Industry" in K. Kempadoo and J. Doezema (eds.), *Global Sex Workers, Rights, Resistance and Redefinition* (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 65–68,

² Altink, *Stolen Lives*, pp. 4–5. See also Bindman, "International Perspective", pp. 65–68 and L. Ward and A. Gillan, "Sex Slaves Trafficked to UK", *The Guardian*, May 30, 2000 and G. Tremlett, "African Women Tricked into Sex Slavery in Spain", *The Guardian*, February 28, 2001.

³ Altink, *Stolen Lives*, pp. 4–5 Barry, *Female Slavery*, pp. 40–41, 96–105, 111–113 and Ward and Gillan, "Sex Slaves Trafficked to UK".

⁴ The UN estimates that there are 200,000 children working as slaves in the West African region. Many of them are employed on cocoa plantations that feed the huge market for chocolate in the West (in the UK alone the chocolate confectionary market is worth £ 4 billion a year.) C. McGreal, "Aboard the Slave Ship of Despair, Traffickers Buying up the Young in West Africa", *The Guardian*, April, 16, 2001 and S. Jeffrey and B. Stafford, "Slavery: The Chocolate Companies Have their Say", *The Guardian Unlimited*, April, 19, 2001.

association between slavery and socio-economic underdevelopment, for which Western historians must take a significant share of the blame, has ensured that the issue of slavery has remained emotive and contentious. Few governments are willing to admit that they have a problem with slavery because this is tantamount to an admission that their nation is less than civilised.⁵ Moreover, Western governments appear to have been content to labour under the comforting, yet false, misapprehension that slavery is incompatible with capitalism and economic growth (again, an attitude that has been nurtured within the Western historiographical discourse on the subject). This misapprehension has resulted in both complacency and inaction on behalf of these powerful Western governments. Yet, it is naïve to imagine that such practices will disappear over time as a result of market forces. The ‘universality’ of slavery, extant as it is in so many varied human societies both geographically, culturally and over time, indicates how that institution is underpinned by far deeper, darker and more fundamental drives within the human condition.⁶

During the 20th century the enslavement and the sexual exploitation of women remained a powerful means to express power, militaristic domination and cultural hegemony. The Japanese rule of Korea (1910–1945) saw 200,000 Korean women forced into prostitution to service the Japanese armed forces.⁷ Many of these women, who were ironically known as the *jungshindae* ‘volunteer comforters’, were massacred as their Japanese captors retreated in 1945.⁸ Furthermore, in February 2001 several high ranking Bosnian Serb officers were found guilty of crimes against humanity and given long prison sentences by The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. These men were being punished for the horrific mass rape, torture and sexual enslavement of thousands of Bosnian Muslim women during the early 1990’s. The Tribunal commented solemnly that

⁵ Barry, *Female Slavery*, pp. 3–5.

⁶ Philips, “Slavery as a Human Institution”, p. 32.

⁷ Altink, *Stolen Lives*, p. 18. A small percentage of European women were also detained and used as *jungshindae* by the Japanese forces. Some of these European victims joined with their surviving Korean counterparts and attempted to sue the Japanese government for compensation during the 1990’s.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

Muslim women and girls, mothers and daughters together, robbed of the last vestiges of human dignity were treated like chattels, pieces of property at the arbitrary disposal of the Serb occupation forces.⁹

The Serbian forces appear to have adopted traditional practices of female abduction as a means to signal their power over the subjugated Muslim population. In many respects, then, their actions were strongly analogous with those undertaken by the warrior fraternities of medieval Britain. The Western media subsequently expressed shock that such abhorrent practices could have occurred in Europe during the late twentieth century. This sexual enslavement was portrayed as an anachronism in modern Western society, an anomalous characteristic of a deeply ingrained and particularly barbaric conflict. Yet, we should not allow our cultural antipathy towards slavery to blind us to its potential for re-emergence during times of violent ethnic conflict. It is important to recognise that slavery is far from incompatible with the forces of capitalism. In spite of this, throughout history, it has always been far more significant as a cultural rather than an economic institution. Indeed, this very resilient ‘human institution’ will never be eradicated from our world as a result of benevolent market forces and economic expediency—that goal can only be achieved through the political, social and intellectual agency of thinking, feeling and caring human beings.¹⁰

⁹ M. Fletcher, “Bosnian Serbs Jailed for Wartime Mass Rape” *The Times*, February 2, 2001. Similar practices are evident amongst the militias of the Sudan see Hutchinson “Nuer ethnicity militarized”, pp. 6–23.

¹⁰ “By one measure, there are more slaves in the world today than at any time in history: 27m people all told, in forced labour camps, debt bondage, the sex industry, professional beggary, domestic servitude, and work—without pay and under threat of violence, which is the definition of slavery—in agriculture, mining and factories. A very large proportion of them are children, many of whom are commercially trafficked.” A.C. Grayling, “The Last Word on Slavery”, *The Guardian*, September 8, 2001. See also Taylor, “Ambushed by the Grotesque”, p. 225.

APPENDIX 1

Slaves Freed in Wills. Table reproduced from D. Pelteret, *Slavery in Early Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1995), pp. 129–130. K = *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici*, ed. Kemble; N = *The Crawford Collection of Early Charters and Documents*, edd. Napier & Stevenson; W = *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, ed. & trans. Whitelock. All are followed by the relevant page and line numbers.

Name of Testator	Number in Sawyer, Anglo-Saxon Charters, and edition	Date	All witeþeowas freed	Slaves Freed		
				All	Proportion	Optional
Wynflæd	S 1539, W 12.9–11	? <i>ca</i> 950	X			
Bp Theodred	S 1526, W 2.17–18, 22; 4.1, 17, 20, 22	942 x 951		X	Half	X
Bp Ælsige	S 1491, W 16.1–3	955 x 958	X			
Ealdorman Ælfheah	S 1485, W 24.6–8	968 x 971	X			
Ælfgifu	S 1484, W 20.7–9	966 x 975	X			
Æthelgifu	S1497	<i>ca</i> 990			Approx. half	
Æthelflæd	S 1494, W 36.30–2	962 x 991			Half	
Siflæd	S 1525, W 92.18; 94.4–5	s.x ² –xi		X		
Abp Ælfric	S 1488, W 54.4–5	1003 x 1004	X			
Bp Ælfwold	S 1492, N 23.3, 28–9	1003 x 1012	X		all those bought	
Ætheling Æthelstan	S 1503, W 56.14–15	1015	X			

Table (*cont.*)

Name of Testator	Number in Sawyer, Anglo-Saxon Charters, and edition	Date	All witeþeowas freed	Slaves Freed		
				All	Proportion	Optional
Thurketel	S 1527, W 68.9	Prob. x 1038		X		
Heyng	S 1528, W 70.13	Prob. 1020 x		X		
Heyng	S 1528, W 70.13	Prob. 1020 x		X		
Wulfsige	S 1537, W 74.5–6	1022 x 1043		X		
Leofgifu	S 1521, W 78.4–5	1035 x 1044		X		
Thurstan	S 1531, W 80.5, 9, 18	1043 x 1045		X		
Wulfgyth	S 1535, W 84.16–17	1042 x 1053			Half	
Wulf	S 1532, K IV.289.20–1	1042 x 1066			30	
Edwin	S 1516, W 86.23–4	<i>ca</i> 1066		X		
Ketel	S 1519, W 88.25	1052 x 1066		X		
Æthelstan Mannson Eadnoth	— K IV. 258.23–5	1066 x ?			13/30	
				Half		

APPENDIX 2

A survey of the slave holding status on the estates of six eleventh-century testators who proposed to manumit all of the slaves on their estates (statistics from Domesday).

Testator	Date of Will	County	Estates named in the Will	Domesday Refs.	Number of slaves present in 1066	Number of slaves Present in 1086
Siflaed	10th–11th Cent	Norfolk	Marlingforde	4,13	0	0
Heyng	Prob. 1020 x	Norfolk	Caister	17,63	0	0
"	"	Norfolk	Ormesby	1,59	0	0
"	"	Norfolk	Scratby	10,43 etc.	0	0
"	"	Norfolk	(Morning) Thorpe?	14,40	1	1
"	"	Norfolk	Thorpe (Abbot)?	14,18	0	0
Thurketel	Prob. x 1038	Suffolk	Palgrave	14,45	3	1
"	"	Suffolk	Whittingham	8,36	0	0
"	"	Suffolk	Wingfield	6,308 etc.	0	0
"	"	Suffolk	Thrandeston	6,66–7 etc.	0	0
"	"	Norfolk	Roydon	2,4	2	2
"	"	"	"	7,12	0	0
"	"	"	"	14,23;26;34	0	0
"	"	"	"	20,23	1	1
"	"	Norfolk	Shimpling?	1,172 etc.	0	0
"	"	Suffolk	Shimpling?	33,13	3	0
"	"	"	"	46,1	6	6
Wulfsige	1022 x 1043	Norfolk	Ash Wicken?	4,45	0	0
"	"	"	"	21,10	2	2
"	"	Norfolk	Wick?	8,60	0	0
"	"	"	"	11,2	1	1
"	"	"	"	23,16	3	2
"	"	"	"	66,95	0	0
"	"	Suffolk	Wyken?	37,5	2	1
"	"	"	"	66,4	3	2
"	"	"	"	66,8	0	0

Table (*cont.*)

Testator	Date of Will	County	Estates named in the Will	Domesday Refs.	Number of slaves present in 1066	Number of slaves Present in 1086
Leofgifu	1035 x 1044	Suffolk	Hintlesham	1,118 etc.	0	0
"	"	<i>Suffolk</i>	<i>Bramford</i>	<i>1,2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
"	"	"	"	<i>1,119</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>2</i>
"	"	"	"	<i>25,52</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>0</i>
"	"	Suffolk	Willisham	8,56	3	1
"	"	Suffolk	Waldingfield	8,48	1	0
"	"	"	"	14,31	0	0
"	"	"	"	25,46	0	0
"	"	"	"	25,49	0	0
"	"	"	"	34,2	0	0
"	"	Suffolk	Haughley	31,42	10	3
"	"	Essex	Gesting-thorpe	23,4	6	6
"	"	Essex	Bentley	35,9	4	4
"	"	"	"	31,23	1	0
"	"	"	"	21,9	0	0
"	"	Essex	Boreham	20,56	3	3
"	"	"	"	22,17	1	0
"	"	"	"	24,58	0	1
"	"	Essex	Lawford	20,69	4	1
"	"	Essex	Great Warley?	9,9	3	5
"	"	"	"	<i>24,61</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>
"	"	Essex	Little Warley?	<i>3,11</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>
"	"	Essex	Belchamp?	<i>5,3</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>5</i>
"	"	"	"	<i>20,26</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>2</i>
"	"	"	"	<i>20,28</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>2</i>
"	"	"	"	<i>43,4</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>1</i>
"	"	Essex	Belchamp Walter?	<i>35,6</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>8</i>
"	"	Suffolk	Stonham?	64,1	1	1
"	"	Suffolk	Stonham?	6,9	0	0
"	"	Suffolk	Stonham Aspoll?	38,6	0	0
Thurstan	1043 x 1045	Norfolk	Shouldham	31,22	8	4
"	"	Suffolk	Wethering-sett	21,39	4	2
"	"	Suffolk	Kedington	33,1	9	0
"	"	Essex	Wimbish	33,7	6	0

Table (*cont.*)

Testator	Date of Will	County	Estates named in the Will	Domesday Refs.	Number of slaves present in 1066	Number of slaves Present in 1086
"	"	Essex	Harlow	11,2	4	4
"	"	Essex	Pentlow	33,11	8	0
"	"	Essex	Ashdon	33,20	2	0
"	"	Essex	Henham	33,19	8	0
"	"	Essex	Dunmow	33,6	10	10
"	"	Essex	Ongar	20,46	3	3
			(Chipping)			
"	"	Cambs.	Knapwell	7,5	?	4
"	"	Cambs.	Burrough	14,78	0	0
			Green			
"	"	Cambs.	Westley Waterless	5,3	?	2
"	"	"	"	14,77	0	0
"	"	"	"	26,4	0	0
"	"	"	"	41,3	0	0
"	"	Cambs.	Dullingham	10,1	?	2
"	"	"	"	14,75	?	2
"	"	"	"	26,3	0	0
"	"	"	"	41,2	0	0

TOTAL SLAVES ON IDENTIFIABLE ESTATES

c. 1066: **88**c. 1086: **39**

PERCENTAGE OF IDENTIFIABLE ESTATES STILL HOLDING SLAVES

c. 1066: **75%**c. 1086: **54%**

♦ **Estates within Domesday that can be positively identified as belonging to the testators appear in bold type.** (Dorothy Whitelock's identification of these estates has been followed, see *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, Cambridge, 1930).

♦ *Estates within Domesday that cannot be identified with certainty but upon which all possible variants were still holding slaves appear in italics. (These estates have been included in the final total with each set of variants counting as one estate. If any one of these variants does not hold any slaves then the collective variant has been classed as a non slave holding estate.)*

◆ Estates that are not identifiable as belonging to the testators appear in normal type. (These estates have not been included in the final total; however, many of them may well correspond to those mentioned in the wills. Moreover, many were still holding slaves in 1066 and 1086.)

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